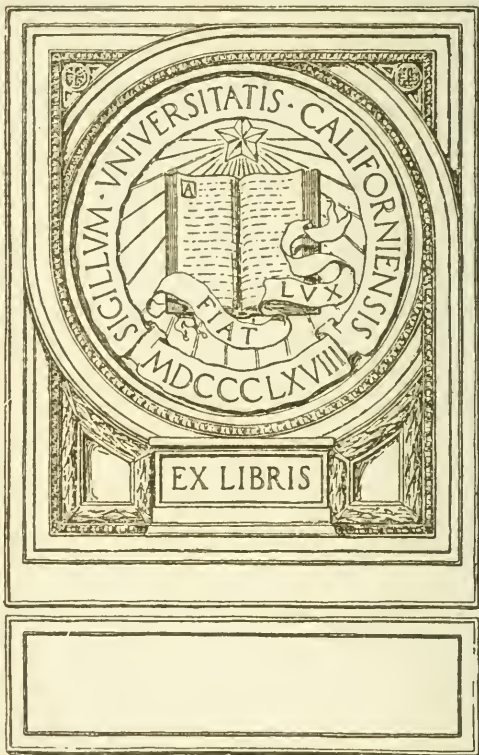


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YOURSELF
AND THE NEIGHBOURS

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IN CHIMNEY CORNERS

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THE RED POACHER

A LAD OF THE O'FRIELS

DR. KILGANNON

BALLADS OF A COUNTRY BOY

THE HARD-HEARTED MAN

WOMAN OF SEVEN SORROWS

THOMAS FOGARTY.



HE ASKED THE MASTHER TO "GIVE YOU MIMORY"

(page 15)

YOURSELF AND THE NEIGHBOURS

BY
SEUMAS MACMANUS

Author of "A Lad of the O'Friels," "In Chimney Corners,"
"The Red Poacher," "Donegal Fairy Stories,"
"Ballads of a Country Boy," etc.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
THOMAS FOGARTY



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*The pages of this book you would make
musical by naming on the very first
the name of*

Catalina

*who once, from out of the wide un-
known beyond Cruach Ghorm's pur-
pled peaks, dawned on your grey
dream-world of Knockagar, laying a
magic light upon the moors, and rim-
ming the hills with a golden glow, and
for whom now moor and mountain
fondly yearn, crying: "Come, a rún!
and be one of the blessed, the Neigh-
bours."*

Donegal, Summer, 1913.

OVER THE HALF-DOOR

IF a stranger looked over your half-door, he would see something to interest and please, even, maybe, to inspire and elevate him. For he would find that your lives are not as barren as your bogs, or your nature quite as rude as your hills. Indeed, he might be led to think that—maybe in obedience to the beautiful law of compensation—an inverse ratio ruled these relations.

It is now a long time since first your people were given choice of fertility of soil or of soul,—and took the latter. And many times since were they tested, but every time they chose what you think was the wiser part. Owen a-Gallagher used to say: “Cromwell commanded us to Hell or Connaught. We took Connaught, and left Hell to himself.”

The Cromwells conquered your bodies only. Among the moors and bogs to which your fathers,—with their fellows, the wolves—were driven, hunted and starving, they reared palaces of beauty imperishable. And with humour from Heaven God lightened their lives. In the head of the toad they found the jewel—and handed it on to you, their heir. If one lived your life for a day, one would joyfully realize this.

Here you give the world a hasty glance over

OVER THE HALF-DOOR

your half-door. But, let it bring sympathy to the study, and it will see very much more than is shown. And, if it like your homely life, let it come again some other day, and learn more, and love more. You will put before it *fáilte a's fiche*—a welcome and twenty. And maybe lift the half-door.

Yourself and the Neighbours

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

I. IN BAREFOOT TIME

FROM the outshot bed adjoining the kitchen fire—a bed that never contained less than three or more than five—you, because you had reached the care-burdened age of eight, tumbled just at the screek o' day, when your mother, the first in the house to stir, was poking last night's coals from the ashes in which they had been raked, building them on the hearth, and piling black turf around them—to make a big, roaring, blazing fire on which would boil the pot for your morning's stirabout. When you had carried in a creel of turf for your mother, and brought her a go of water from the garden well, and she had rewarded you with a fadge of unbuttered oaten bread—surreptitiously, because it would never do for either your father, or the bunch who were still in the outshot bed sleeping with one eye open, to know—you took a grown man's stick in your fist and drove

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

Branny and Spreckly to the Daisy Park, there to herd them from the corn patch till a late breakfast hour. If the morning was a frosty one, 'twas biting indeed for your poor bare feet; and you must be ever moving to keep the little feet from crying. Or, if you dared rest a while, you had to do the goose—one foot drawn under you, and one only on the inhospitable ground. And you favoured them turn and turn about. If it was a morning that poured torrents of rain, or one that breathed a stepmother's breath from the north, you brought old sacks and a couple of sticks, and, with the aid of a friendly whinbush on the fence side, made a haven that was truly a heaven. What exquisite joy to watch from your Elysian shelter, where you hugged yourself in selfish comfort, the blackheads, and cunnellans, and heather-tops and long grass-tufts, bending and swaying fearfully beneath the foot of the ravager! and Branny and Spreckly, their shoulders to the wind that threatened to blow tails and horns off them, sedulously cropping the niggard blades to make milk for the stirabout which, by anticipation, even now made the mouth of the hungry boy water! Of course there were magic mornings on the moors likewise, when, standing by your cows' tails, you, with eyes widening in wonder, watched the red sun roll over the shoulder of Barnes Mór and reveal an Eden that,

IN BAREFOOT TIME

you were falsely told, had long, long ago been lost. But every kind of morning, of those that you herded upon the great wild moor, had for you a mystery, an awe, or a delight of its own. Sometimes, in fact, steeped in wonder, or lost in rapture, you so far forgot yourself that you even ceased counting the minutes till the call should come for breakfast.

But what a raid you, savagely ravenous, did make on the stirabout-pot then! No prince or potentate in all the wide world made such a luxuriously gluttonous breakfast! And sure in all the wide world, there was no dish whose delights could equal oaten stirabout with the small sup of new milk that your mother granted you, and the big bowl of freshly churned buttermilk—no dish at all, at all! Except, of course, tea with buttered farls of hard bread. But then, this was a feast that you felt even princes didn't get from their mothers except on extraordinary occasion as a reward for service rare—maybe finding the nest of the errant duck who had been laying abroad for three weeks. And always, here with a little ache at your heart, you recall that sad, sad morn on which, just as you had concluded a more than usually gluttonous gorge of a more than usually ravenous boy, your mother suddenly and unexpectedly set before you a lake of tea and a mountain of buttered farls! Tears throng your eyes again remem-

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

bering how you laid your child-head on the impossible banquet-board and sobbed heartbreakingly.

You travelled three miles to school every day—if you were lucky. If you were unlucky, the school was five miles from you, or six. But what, after all, did a few miles less or more matter to you, who could, like a hare, scud the moors and bogs and hills and dales that lay between. The school was even a bigger thatched house than your father's—eight or nine steps long and four or five steps wide, and the eaves higher than a man's head—into which were packed ninety-nine other youngsters—all of you, if the day was wet, drenched to the skin, yet larking and light-hearted, and all of you bawling together at the top of your voices, everyone a different thing, and the master outbawling the whole hundred of you. Even if it was your first coming to school, there was no missing your goal, for you heard it four hills away. At first though, your elder brother, if you had one, or else Michael Hegarty's son Denis, carried you most of the way on his back, your two feet stuck into his pockets—which made comfortable stirrups—and your arms round his neck: except on your very, very first day—when 'twas your father who carried you thither, and soothed you, when perturbed naturally at sight of the great big, big house with a window for every day in the week, and a roof on which even your great father could barely lay his

IN BAREFOOT TIME

hand, and who led you up to the awe-striking man with spectacles, and requested him to make a schoolmaster or a priest out of you, and assured him that you had a great headpiece entirely, and would confound him some day in front of his scholars if he didn't be on his guard; and asked him to "give you mimory," and besought him to teach you Tare and Tret, and the Double Rule o' Three, and finally patted you on the head, and said "God bless ye, Johnneen, and be a good boy, and learn your spellin's and your sums, and the Masther 'll make a man out o' ye." The Master, then, led you to the fire, dispersed at the point of the cane half a score young rascals who, seated on the bare floor around it, had been pommelling one another, cracking their jokes and acting their antics—and, seating you in solitary glory on a pile of books by the hearth, told you to fetch under your arm every morning two turf, your daily contribution to the fire, and in your hand every Monday a penny, your weekly contribution to him.

Immediately the Master left you, your school career began, for a *gearsún* came up the floor on his stomach (so that the Master might not see him) to know if you would fight Micky Tum-money. To be sure, you never heard of Micky Tummoney before, and knew not whether he was the size of a house or a mouse; but long before you came to school, you learned what manliness

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

was: so you promptly signed articles to fight Micky Tummoney—or, failing him, any taker—after school in the Square Park. And then you saw the apostle of sport continue his grovelling pilgrimage under the desks, from one prospective pugilist to another, arranging the daily battle list.

Your lunch you called your bit. It was a hunk of oaten bread or, in poorer times, india-bread—that your mother crammed into your pocket before leaving home. This effeminacy of a lunch you followed until you knew better—that is to say, for a fortnight. After that you either ate it, for convenience sake, on the way to school, or used it as ammunition in a pelting match. If your fellows discovered you eating, above all, a *bit* of the despised india-bread at school, or shamefully concealing it on your person, they sarcastically sang at you:

“Paddy, Paddy, India-buck!
With his tail tied up!”

and the deadly satire of this, your first introduction to English poetry, had quick and decisive effect.

The first thing, then, that you learned at school, was to despise your *bit*—your own bit, that is, for it was a different matter, of course, if you were able to possess yourself of some other body's. The next was to despise slaps. For the severest cut of the cane that your delinquency earned, or the Master could give, you held out your little red palm

IN BAREFOOT TIME

with a stoic expression which opened to you the doors of the hearts of all the brave bold fellows in Cornamona School. Your hardihood, however, had to stand its final test in the Square Park after school was loosed. There, while the other pairs of listed knights waited their turn, you planted your black bare foot opposite Micky Tummoney's very black bare foot, and the two of you glared at each other—all the more fearfully because neither of you knew what he was glaring about. As both of you were dilatory about leading unprovoked hostilities, anyone of a dozen obliging friends (*agents provocateurs*), always prompt to further a good cause, extended a horizontal arm between you, saying, "Who dar' spit over that?" when both of you, instantaneously and simultaneously daring, gave and got glorious cause for battle. The salivial insult must immediately be wiped out—in blood or mud! Maybe the *agent provocateur* adopted, instead, the effective plan of demanding: "Who'll say bread?" drawing from both yourself and Micky, in the one breath, "Bread!" "Then," would Intermediary continue, this time indulging in poetry, "pull three hairs out of his head." As *bread* and *head* make poetry that even Tom Moore couldn't beat, no young man of spirit dare shrink the logical consequence of having uttered the first mystic word. Accordingly, yourself and Micky made

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

desperate simultaneous effort to put the command into execution: but like the greedy boy, who (as you heard read in class that day) failed to get a nut at all out of the narrow-necked jar, because he grabbed too many, both of you were unsuccessful in your praiseworthy efforts to satisfy the demands of Poetry. But, no matter, the sought-for-end was attained: Micky and you pounded each other gloriously, reddening mouths and noses and blackening eyes, and forty times rolling over each other in the mud in vain effort to strangle one the other—just to make a Cornamona holiday.

After the single combats were pulled off to the satisfaction of everyone concerned (except, of course, the subjects), the battle royal began. When sixty of you reached the Crossroads—at which point you, the Back-o'-the-Hill boys, must take the east road, and the Glens' boys the west, it was always tacitly understood that you should treat yourselves to a farewell stoning match. From long and careful practice every man on both sides was a crack stone-thrower, and sure marksman whose missile if it missed your head, you heard B-r-r-r! fearfully in passing: just like Thady the Soldier told of the cannon balls of his acquaintance in the American war! You Back-o'-the-Hill boys generally prevailed over your enemies, for you were indomitable fellows. Yet the Glens' boys, winning

IN BAREFOOT TIME

admiration even in defeat, stubbornly disputed every inch of the ground they yielded—and oftentimes the battle lasted an hour, and covered two miles, before retreat was turned into a rout, and you, Back-o'-the-Hill boys, faced homeward, riotously cheering, and heaving rocks at the defenceless doors, or down the chimneys, of isolated cabins, thereby winning lively company on the way—for one ranting, raging, wrathful man pursued and passed you on to the next—and the time was thus cheerily whiled away along your whole line of march. 'Twas glorious! Going to school, in fact, might well have been intolerable to you, if it hadn't been for the coming home.

You were due at home at four o'clock: you arrived at six—if you weren't a very bad boy. In the latter case you came at seven—or after. From four onward your father, whose persistent simplicity of mind was marvellous, quitted his work in the field every half hour and journeyed to the house to enquire if “that natarnal young scoundrel hasn't come yet, or what new divilment is he up to the day?” (It should be remarked that he has now given up the idea of making a priest out of you.) Probably, if you didn't make a detour with two comrades for a raid upon Jaimsy McGrath's bean-field, it was your day for robbing Maura Managhan's orchard in Magher-a-more—for the blae-

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

berries on Slieve Cullion were long ago eaten, and the nuts and sloes in Glen-na-madha not yet ripe. Of course, Maura's apples weren't ripe either—but, if you didn't thoughtfully take time by the forelock, the rascals of Meenagran, or the hungry young natives who inhabited the upper end of the parish would have garnered the green harvest before you. All the bean-fields and orchard lands lay in a Land of Promise five miles away; hardly a hawthorn flourished in your bleak, black, upland country. When the early harvest came, it required assiduous attention, and careful planning, and an efficient Bureau of Information on the comings and goings of the enemy—the orchard-owners—else yourself and comrades ran the risk of being cheated of your yearly tribute, while the over-fed Bodachs of the valley might actually enjoy their own fruit. If, not having had the good luck to rob an orchard or raid a bean-field, you had only been indulging in acts of general wickedness which were their own mere reward, you carried home a ravenous appetite for the stack of potatoes that (by grace of a long-suffering mother) were toasting in the ashes for you, and which you kitched with salt—or, if the gods (and your mother) were particularly propitious, as once in a while was the case, a luxurious blend of pepper and salt. And so intent were you on filling yourself with the blissful banquet that

IN BAREFOOT TIME

the storm of your father's rebukes and threats broke over your busy head in vain.

However, if, for once heeding an unreasonable father's rebukes and threats, you travelled the three miles from school in two hours, your pitiable reward for this remarkable feat was to be condemned to the slave galleys, breaking *sheuchs* or kibbing potatoes, herding Branny and Spreckly, or picking stones in the meadow-field during all those glorious evening hours that were never meant for slaves—those hours when the song-birds taunted you to find their nests, and the moor fowl crowed over you, for now their eggs would go untouched, and contemptuous comrades, passing with *caman* on shoulder ironically invited you to the game in the Rushy Meadow, where the Back-o'-the-Hill was to engage the Mountain-Foot for the *caman* championship, and your ears were offended by the tantalizing bip! of the handball on the Widow Brogan's gable-end or by the hated cries of other comrades who, in fields just hid from view, indulged in the delights of "Duck," "Steal the Caps," "Barney, Barney, Buck-and-Doe," or "Of all the Birds o' the Air and all the Fishes o' the Say." You set your teeth and went to work faster and faster, and tried not to think *too* bitterly upon tyrant fathers and the trampled rights of the weak!

If, however, you heard from the Rushy Meadow

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

the Mountain-Foot's triumphant shouts ring out too loud and too often, and those of the Back-o'-the-Hill's grow fainter and less frequent, 'tis ten to one that, after a brave struggle to yield filial obedience to a tyrant, human nature triumphed; you spat upon slavery and, answering duty's call, bounded into the midst of your fellows with a wild huzza that rallied the weakening host and rolled them on to their astounded opponents with such irresistible swoop as not merely recovered them—in less time than it takes to tell it—all the vantage ground they had lost, but actually won the day for them in a trail of swift and lurid glory!

After that ecstatic hour 'twas just bliss to suffer the heavy stick and the heavier tongue of a mad, mad father.

Of course there were in those days things far more dreaded than unreasonable fathers. If, unluckily, night fell on you and your comrades when not yet in sight of home, 'twas a hair-raising experience to cross the Ainey Steps, where, twenty-five years before, the ghost appeared to Neill McRory—and took a bottle of whiskey from him; or to have to pass the Bearna Dearg where some one or other saw a ghost every week; or, above all, the Fairy Fort where you ran the dread risk of seeing the Gentle People at their revels. Sooner than encounter the perils of the Fairy Fort you made

IN BAREFOOT TIME

a wide detour, so that you could only just see afar the fairy lights, and faintly hear their fairy music and laughter. But the passage of the Bearna Dearg, which you *must* come through, and of the Ainey Steps which you *had* to cross, stilled the heart in your breast, froze the marrow in your bones, and temporarily turned every hair on your head into a tenpenny nail. And in this time of terror all mortal sins that stained your soul, from orchard-robbing to gambling for horny-buttons, and fifty other equally fearful crimes, cried loud upon your trail, till anguishedly you vowed never, never more to walk in sin—after nightfall.

When, by assiduously pursuing your varied callings, you had converted your clothes into what your mother termed “flutterjigs,” and that patient parent had ten times rebuilt them till at last no trace of the original remained, your father ordered her one day she was preparing to go to “the Town” (mysterious Town), to fetch you home (O joy!) the makings of a new suit! Your poor mother had innocently asked “What stuff?” and the cynical parent retorted, “Cast iron, if ye can get it.” But ’twas corduroy she got. And you, proud man, brought the bundle under your arm to Taig the Tailor and got measured for a new investment, and the finished suit promised—O tailor’s promises!—for Sathurda’ night. You thereafter learned, in

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

soreness of spirit, the wherefore of the nickname by which Taig was known to the countryside—"Taig Sathurda' Night." For the seven weeks that followed Taig's putting the tape on you, you might be said to have been an inmate of his household; for, if you weren't there in person (and 'twas rarely you weren't), you were surely there in spirit. And oh! the bitter Sathurda' nights that were yours ere yet that suit was begun, and the tedious, tedious weeks, black days and dreary nights until, at last, just when creation was on the verge of cataclysm, your bundle of corduroy, grateful smelling, was opened and spread upon Taig's board, and he took chalk and shears and tape to aid him in the mapping of your anatomy. During the making of the suit, you watched every single stitch that Taig drew, and every snip that he snipped. Never was bridal raiment so ardently longed for, so sedulously watched in development, or so ecstatically fondled as was that suit of corduroys whose ravishing joys put to shame the raptures of silk, or satin, or cloth of gold. You invested yourself in the glorious raiment then and there (making the change behind a chair), just that Taig might satisfy himself it was the best "shoot o' clothes" ever went from his fingers. His wife Sally, with a prayer, sprinkled it and you with holy water, and wished you your health to wear it. "And," bitterly added your

IN BAREFOOT TIME

father, *sotto voce*, "tear it," as he counted down to Taig four shillings for the making of it. Taig, heartily wishing you health *never* to wear it, prayed blessings on it and you, and, taking from the miscellaneous collection of coins which formed your father's payment a red penny, put it into the new trousers' pocket—"just for luck." And for the first time in all your life you swelled with that blissful feeling which only swells the breasts of bloated capitalists. As you went home to your mother that evening, only touching the ground in an odd place, you knew not which was the greater joy—the sudden achievement of wealth or the new suit. The new suit soon proved its surer claim, however; for, like the spendthrift you were, the money was gone in a week!

You had heard of such a thing as a circus. Yourself and comrades used to listen, awe-stricken and fascinated, to the tradition that, a great number of years before, when your fathers were boys, this most wonderful and gorgeous thing, which it took nine piebald horses to haul, and which was accompanied by a live camel with real humps, a learned pig, and a monkey that was more than human, once passed on the post-road seven miles away. Like the comet, merely seen in passing, no one knew whence it came or whither it went. Like the comet too, it might some day re-appear, and again dis-

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

appear into that mysterious space which represented the rest of the world to you.

On Sunday afternoons (for it was on a Sunday afternoon, people said, the circus had before passed) yourself and comrades frequently took the seven miles' journey that brought you to the post road. You travelled eagerly to the highest points on that road, east and west, and strained your eyes looking far off, and then knelt down and held your ears to the ground—for Neill Moloney told you that the rumbling of the great caravan was, in that way, heard for two hours before it arrived and for two hours after it passed! Oftentimes, agreeing that you certainly did hear a great, distant, rumbling, you sat down and waited and watched—for hours and hours!—even till fairy-time had fallen, and finally even ghost-time, on a handful of teeth-chattering heroes; but, alas! vain were the sacrifice and suffering, for the circus never came! Its rumbling must have come to your ears from some more fortunate clime. And that reminded you that you heard tell there were boys in America, away over the sea—cousins of your own even—who saw the circus passing almost every year of their lives. Oh! to have been your cousin in America then! However, sure you had once again seen the road where it passed. One cannot have the universe.

IN BAREFOOT TIME

And if you didn't see the circus, sure you saw the Town—saw it when you were barely twelve years of age. It would be literally correct for you to say that you saw it at a little more than ten years of age; for, yourself and the boys, after long talking about it, set out one Sunday after Mass, and ran, and ran, and ran, and ran,—seeming to run beyond the world entirely—till you reached the crest of Killymard, and from there, sure enough, as you had been advised, saw the sun glancing upon a lot of things in the far distance—the roofs of the Town-houses you were assured—roofs made of a thing called slate on which the sun glimmered. That was a thrilling sight; and it set some vague thing stirring in your breast when later, away on the lonely hills, you herded, and used to recall that wonderful glancing and glimmering, like signals beckoning you. Would you ever be in a town? Would you ever live in a town? and be dressed in shop cloth? and have shoes on your feet? and have a hat? and a whole handful of pennies in your pocket? Bah! that fancy of yours, wilful from unbridled indulgence in those long, lonely hours upon the hills and moors, badly needed curbing!

But, at twelve, your father let you go to the Town with him one day, seating you on top of Jimminy Kelly's turf-cart. You didn't sleep any the night before; and you were out of bed, and into

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

your new suit, before the ring o' day showed in the sky. It was going to be the day of your life. And it was. On that day was lifted for you, as was not yet for any of your comrades, the deep mystery that had ever enveloped that wonderful thing, the Town. There were houses and houses—and on both sides of the road too!—not less than a hundred houses you were sure! Fifty anyway. And with upstairs in nearly every one of them. And shops and shops. With windows, and things in the windows—pipes and things—and balls, and sweets, and tops, and things. Oh, to be a town-boy! Every day of one's life to come and stand all day looking into the grand windows! Maybe some day, like in a story—and sure stories often *have* come true!—a great rich man or a prince would come along and give you a penny, and you would buy balls and sweets and tops with it, and marbles too. Without your knowing it, your father came along, when with hungry eyes you were devouring these treasures, and he put his hand on your shoulder and said: "Johnny *a dhilis*,* I'm heart-sorry I haven't a penny for to give you to buy marvels, or a ball, but *a dhilis, a dhilis*, I cannot." Surprised at the pitiful tenderness in his voice, you looked up quickly, and saw there was something wet-like glinting in his eye. You knew that his visit to the town was

*Pronounced *a ycelish*.

YOUR COURTIN' DAYS

for the purpose of begging the landlord (who lived in the greatest, grandest house there) to grant him sparins for the rent till he should sell Spreckly (poor Spreckly!) "Father, dear," you said while some curious big raw thing got up in your throat, "I wouldn't be bothered with balls, or marvels, or them things."

A tear from your guardian angel, falling upon the black lie's record, instantly transmuted it into a shining golden truth!

And that moment you ceased to be a child.

II. YOUR COURTIN' DAYS

Spreckley was not sold that time after all. In the nick of time, by God's blessing, your oldest brother Barney, who had been brought out by Aunt Sheila to America—to Philadelphia—sent home a monied letter with three pounds in it. And Spreckly was saved. Then grateful hearts rejoiced.

Nevertheless you had left childhood's dreams behind. You were now in first grips with a grim world. You had quitted school able to read, write, and figure; and you were in the South Park plying a spade between your father and your elder brother, digging, foot for foot with each, manfully and well. You did all kinds of work on your

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

father's little patch for three years—till younger brothers were fit to take your place.

Then, on the morning of Old May Day* you rose up very early, and took the hearty breakfast which your mother had ready for you—tea and bread and eggs on this momentous occasion. And you tied up, in the large red handkerchief your mother gave you, your sadly few little duds, shook the hand of your father, who tried hard to say: "God take care of you, boy!", took your mother's blessing and the hot tear that she let fall on the back of your hand, mumbled a promise not to forget her warnings or your prayers, reverently blessed yourself as to a bountiful sprinkling of holy water you crossed the threshold, set your bundle upon your stick over your shoulder, and, too cowardly to take even one backward glance at the mother who, through mist of tears, watched you from the door, faced the twenty mile tramp to the far town of Donegal, where the Hiring Market was that day held.

You were launched upon life now—at sixteen. And many a long, long thought did your young breast harbour on that memorable morning journey! And many and many a time did the longing heart of you race back to the little thatched cabin

*Twelfth of May. We still observe the Old Calendar reckoning for the more important of our local festivals.

YOUR COURTIN' DAYS

situated on the cold shoulder of Cornamona—race back, and taking position in the chimney corner, hungrily watch every move of father and mother, sister, and little brothers!

You found yourself in The Town—in the Market Square—taking your place in the rows (which lined both sides of the street) of boys and girls, all with their little bundles in their hands, and each, like yourself, an exile from his or her own loved hillside or cherished glen. And men and women, better dressed and fatter and rosier than you were used to see, were walking back and forward in front of you, viewing you up and down and at every angle, and commenting *pro bono publico* upon your possible virtues and certain defects.

These were your prospective masters and mistresses—farmers and their wives from the rich country beyond the hills. The town of Donegal was built so close to the border line between hill and plain that it naturally became the meeting place and mart for mistress and maid, master and man.

After critically viewing the whole line of boys and girls, three or four times, and pausing in front of you every time, a comfortable farmer and his wife spoke to you at length, and invited you to step out till they'd get a better look at you. And when they had asked you what kinds of work you

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could do, and what was your ability (strength), and whether you could milk twelve cows and churn the produce, and mow and sow, and shear and plough, set and dig, feed pigs and thresh the corn, they requested your terms for the half-year till Old Hallowday—with privilege of continuing the contract, if you survived, and they liked you. You asked six pounds, and they, professing shock, offered four, and finally, after haggling for three hours, and coming and going several times, and getting a dozen different friends to help them pull down your price, closed with you for five pounds ten, with alternate Sundays and Holy Days free. And on their car you, with your little bundle, were borne that evening twenty miles further from the home where your heart still stayed—the glad sight of which could not greet your eyes for half a year to come.

Weary was the work, and light the leisure, under the roof of the stranger. You rose and began your duties at five in the morning, and you ended and went to bed at ten at night. You had mighty few minutes to yourself in all that time. There were no dances, no raffles, no weddings, no spree, no markets, no fairs, for you. Besides these wealthy ones—worth a hundred pounds, if a penny—who lived on the fertile plains, were not the same at all as your own people of the stony hills. They

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had mountains of money in the bank, but not a mole-hill of merriment in their hearts. They wore shop-cloth, and had a suit all for Sunday, and ate great hearty meals, with either fish or meat to their Sunday dinner always; but they never knew an idle hour, nor could enjoy one if it was given them. They were christened without sporting, married without courting, and almost buried without waking. They were heathens—that was the short and the long of it. Your time among them was a spell in purgatory. You didn't feel *yourself* at all, and groaned in bondage. But the five pounds ten helped at home. And that made bondage bearable. Rejoicing, you thanked Heaven with a full heart when, at the end of two years, the call came for you to return from captivity. Your two next-younger brothers were now going to hire, your elder brother had been taken away to the Land of Promise—to Philadelphia—and your father needed your help at home.

'Twas then the beginning of new life to you. Everybody in all the countryside was poor enough to be happy, and to take Sundays as days of peace, and joy, and relaxation, and summer evenings and winter nights for social intercourse and innocent enjoyment. The poor boys and girls of home were as merry-hearted as if money had never cursed the world. Every boy of them had a Girl-of-his-heart

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—a *cailin deas*; and every girl had her Share-o'-the-World. It was in the Spring—the glorious Spring, when you came back from Babylon. And, as if it were yesterday, you vividly remember those glorious moonlight nights when, your day's work done and your little supper dispatched, you walked nightly with Nelly Caraban over the brow of Knockagar to the boys' and girls' meeting-place on the Glen Bridge—the Glen Bridge where three or four roads casually came together, and, having crossed it, just as casually wandered away again, as though they had only come to see what the boys and girls were about, anyhow. Though, *you* sometimes thought they came there to give the boys and girls who loved to saunter on them an excuse for meeting at such a romantic spot as the Glen Bridge. Trees grew there—both above and below the bridge. A mysterious murmuring river that you always heard crooning to itself some quaint old tune ran far beneath, hidden for the most part by the blackthorns and hawthorns, and the hazels and hollies, which reached to one another from bank to bank, trying to hide it. But a glitter, a glance, and a gleam, here and there, discovered the well-guarded one's whereabouts. Pools by the Glen Bridge were troutful, and the bushes were birdful, and all around was a gentle charmed fairy haunt—fairies, the gen-

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tlest of the Gentle People, and most loving, who delighted to see the boys and girls meet and mingle, and the music of their merry hearts resound upon the bridge. A fiddle or a flute was often in their company. Sometimes a wandering bagpiper happened along, and underneath the arching trees, on the moonlight mottled road, they danced the jig and ran the reel to the magic of his piping. The play of the moonlight on the rosy faces and black, and fair, and red heads of the girls, was something that might well entrance angels, let alone you and the rest of the mountain mortals. Oh! the beauty of those moonlit evenings shining far down Memory's aisle with a light that can seldom be forgotten and never effaced! The innocence of those meetings and matings! The joys of them! Not stingy was the world in bestowing delights on you since then, but not all of these together—honey-sweet though they have been—could equal the charm unspeakable of those moonlight meetings on the bridge of Glen Dreenan in the white, white springtime—the springtime of your life and of your love, as well as of the year.

The long, long summer gloamings that seemed to have no ending were happy times for you upon your hillsides. Especially happy was Midsummer Night—Bonfire Night—when the boys and girls from far and near gathered on the top of Drimag-

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ra and built a bonfire whose blaze was yearly seen and praised by other bonfire companies fifty miles afar. By the bonfire that night you danced with the girl of your choice, sang songs to your heart's content, and at midnight, taking up a burning brand, described the charmed circle round the crops and round the cattle, and round the houses where Christians dwelt—a circle which for twelve months was as wall of brass against all evil, ban and blight. Often on the summer evenings you met the boys at the cross roads, and tried leaps, and threw the stone with them, till, after the cows were milked, the bare-headed girls, in two's and three's, came on the scene and the dance was begun. On Sundays, the moment Mass was over, with the breathless crowd you hurried to the handball court—Peggy Quinn's gable—and you, the champion of the upper end of the parish, engaged for the fifty-fifth time Tim Griffin, the champion of the parish's lower end; while all the parish ranged itself around the three sides of the alley, alternately yelling till you feared its lungs would crack, and holding its breath till there was danger of explosion, and finally doing its endeavour to pull the arms out of you under pretence of handshaking when you had beaten Tim by a single ace. Or you produced your caman, which, unregenerate that you were, you had during Mass hidden in the long grass that

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grew on some poor devil's grave, and you joined the team that was going to Glen Mor "to take the consait out o' the Glen boys" who thought they could play *caman*; though, maybe you returned with the conceit clean knocked out of yourself—for a week. You were fresh enough in the afternoon to join the group of girls who gathered on the hillside to bask in the sun and show their O-so-neat-and-trig white linen dresses, and their O-so-beautifully-combed-and-shining heads of hair, and sit and make merry with these till the sun, who loved indulgently to dally these summer Sunday evenings, felt compelled at last to leave the scene. Across the valley you heard the music of the young people's laughter on the opposite hillside; and below, you could see the courting pairs, like coupled sheep, sidling along the path by the river's bank. When the gloaming came, with a black-haired girl you took the path yourself, and went down it as swift as a snail. Returning again, alone, you walked briskly and whistled light-heartedly. Another beautiful summer Sunday had ended, and you would have to be afoot betimes in the morning, with the scythe on your shoulder—for your father's meadow was now ready for mowing. How is it anyhow, you wonder, that there are now no Sundays like those Sundays! no Summers like those Summers! or Springs like those Springs! How is it that the sun

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does not shine so bright, or the moon so soft, any longer, or that the gloaming does not fall so tardily, or so soothingly, or so blissfully, or carry with it the enchantment that those gloamings carried in your courting days? You don't know how it is, of course. But it is.

Well it cannot be helped! I suppose sun and moon and the world entire are all getting old and careworn.

There was time for everything in those days—time and to spare. Time enough for work and plenty of time for play. You had for your enjoyment not merely the spring evenings, and summer twilights, and winter nights, and every one of the fifty-two Sundays—and a dozen delightful Holy Days; but you had—cream of them all!—the Harvest Fair of Knockagar. That was a day looked forward to by youthful humankind and girls for eleven months!—the greatest day of all the year for all the world! There would be assembled all the boys and all the girls, for miles and miles, and miles more on top of that again, with their new suits and dresses, and all their pocket money, the hoarding of months; their heaviest purses and lightest hearts; their gayest wiles and brightest smiles. You had half-a-crown and a new homespun suit yourself. And the girl who was now shining in your heart, Molly Gilbride, had a new dress and

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a new bright ribbon in her shining fair hair; and she would go home with another new ribbon—you would answer for that. Yes, that was the whitest and brightest and gayest great day of all the white, bright year. For it the girls were preparing for months and months beforehand, and of its wonderful incidents they talked for months afterwards—of what old boys they had seen, and new boys whose acquaintance they had made; of the boys who had nodded to them, and the boys who had chaffed and chatted; and what boys had passed and repassed them with hung heads and blushing cheeks, fain, but fearful, to speak. Above all what boys had walked them and treated them to fairlies, and made them innocent merry company in the tents, and seen them home by the light of the loveliest harvest-moon that ever shone on earth! You met and made merry with many bright mountain girls on that blessed Harvest Fair Day of Knockagar. And you thought you never saw the girls look so winsome, with such entrancing blushes, and captivating shy looks, with hair so shiny and dresses so neat, and colours so bright, and with oh! such an indescribable, fascinating, captivating Something about them as still makes that great day so strikingly stand out, haloed with golden glow in Memory's whitest vista! Very distinct in your memory, too, are the marvellously learned discourses of the

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great foreign doctor who, through pure love of mankind, was bestowing on the multitude—for the mere cost of bottling—his elixirs for the cure of all human ills; and the hair-raising magic of the Black-Art-Man; and the yelling of the apple-huxters who pelted passers-by with fruit to convert them into customers; and the bawling of the ballad singers, whose absorbing epics drew dense crowds open-mouthed around them; and the *dilisc* sellers; and the great white-roofed tents in rows and rows, some for the sale of fairlies to boys and girls, some for eating, and some for drinking; and the forest of blackthorns flashed in air where the joyous fever of a fight ran wild! You have still in memory the Harvest Fair too, for that it was there you met The Farmer's Boy—the Boy whose name was known to none, though his envied fame was familiar to every brave fellow within a hundred miles, whose heart warmed for suffering country; the Boy who carried on his head a price that might well have tempted the richest, yet never induced the poorest, to betray him. Your eye brightened, and your cheek flushed, and your figure straightened, when you found suddenly whose hand you were shaking! In a twinkling, you felt, the Boy's wonderful gray eyes had searched the inmost corners of your soul. And you will never forget the tide of pride that surged through your veins, when,

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dropping your hand, the Boy simply said, to those who had introduced him: "He'll do." And that afternoon in the gloom of a byre, among cows that glanced over-shoulder wonderingly, you and five other stout fellows knelt, and took from the Boy the oath which ever since you have religiously kept—the oath of love and loyalty to the Little Dark Rose and of scorn and defiance to the Dark-Haired-One's oppressor. It gave your heart a pang to think that for a cause so noble and a purpose so sacred you had to conceal yourself in a cow-house—only a momentary pang, though. You strode into the fair again a prouder man and more daring. Even Molly, wondering and admiring, remarked this. You just smiled, and bought her the best ribbon the fair and your finances could afford. But when, accompanying her home that evening, you sat her down underneath the thorn, just a stone-throw from her own house, and she had laid her head on your strong shoulder, you told her the beautiful secret (which brought to her eyes tears of joy) that you were now one of *The Boys*. Molly, without speaking, pressed your hand in both of hers. It needed not her speech; for you knew that her soul said to your soul: "In Ireland all men who are men must divide their hearts between two loves." Stooping down, you kissed Molly's white forehead. Then, looking away through the gloam-

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ing, as both of you sat silent, you saw the mysterious meetings in the Glen and on the hilltop and in the solitude of crowds (as on this day), and you heard mysterious glad tidings from the North and from the South whispered at those gatherings, and marvellous tidings from the greater Ireland far to the West, where patiently watched and strenuously worked uncountable thousands of leal ones whose hearts would never forget. You kissed Molly again that night, as you went with her up the *cassey* to her own door.

When you were shearing the golden corn on the Whinny Hill next day, you were in a reflective mood, your comrades noted. You were sweetly pensive, for you heard what the corn said, rustling as you cut your way through it. It said "Molly! Molly! Molly!"; and then "Molly Gilbride! Molly Gilbride!" Molly somehow stood up before you in a new light. You used to chat and chaff with her, and then with the next girl you met; and you thought you knew her, and all of them. But now you unreservedly agreed with the corn when it said: "You didn't know Molly—didn't know Molly!" The real Molly revealed herself that time she pressed your hand last night.

You were learning to know her now, and the study was sweet and all-absorbing. That very evening you must go for another lesson—and fre-

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quently after. It was a long study—but you were not to be daunted. You found harvest moons conducive to progress, and Autumn gloamings, and the Bridge at Glen Dreenan. When the winter evenings were on, you found it facilitated study to drop into Cormac Gilbride's o' nights and sit by the bright blazing fire, exchange pipes with Cormac, and opinions with his good wife Sorcha—without saying a word at all, at all, to Molly, who, with eyes downcast and cheek flushed—you noted all this with the tail of your eye—was absorbed in her spinning wheel in the corner. You included her, of course, in your incoming "God save all here!" at seven, and heard her join, with father and mother, in giving you an outgoing "God send you safe!" at eleven. But nothing more had passed between you—seemingly. Yet it is a question whether these lessons were not the most profitable and all-satisfying.

At the winter-night dances in everybody's house, here and there among the hills, your study of the new Molly steadily advanced. There you met many bright-eyed girls—but none like Molly; and there she saw many tall brave boys—but none like you. You knew this, because, returning from every such dance, you compared notes on the point. At last, one night, going home from the best dance of them all—the dance given by Farrell McKeown the fid-

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dler in Dominic Gallagher's big kitchen in Drimalusk—you both agreed, finally, that 'twas waste of time for either to go further seeking the equal of the other—it couldn't be found; and henceforward you'd give up trying.

Next day you spoke to your father, as you wrought side by side with him in the potato field, saying you believed you had come to the time o' day when you ought to be thinking of settling down and marrying a wife, and your father, after a minute's silence, said: "Well, Johnny, *a thaisge*, I'm thinkin' 't would be no sin. I'll give ye my blissin' and the far end o' the farm—five acres o' clay land—and help ye to rise a house on it. Have ye a good girl in your eye?"

"Molly Gilbride isn't a bad girl," you insinuated, with your head bent very low over an extra tough bit of lea you had struck.

"Her father and mother's daughter shouldn't be," your father replied. "They're dacent, industr'ous, right-livin' people, and everybody's good word is on them. I'll never hang my head for a son of mine marr'in' into that family."

Your mother—for sure there was nothing could escape her—knew, as sure as there was a head on her body, that there were carryin's-on between yourself and Molly. But she supposed it was all right. She never heard a word again' the girl. And she

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had to confess that she was as neat-stepped-out a *cailin* as walked to Killymard chapel; she was well "come-home," for her father and mother were both of dacent stock. She ordered your father to step over with you that night to Cormac Gilbride's and fix up things, if they were willing.

You *did* chat Molly that night in the corner, with both your backs to the company, while your father, in the opposite corner, debated with Cormac and his wife, compared the prestige of your respective families, and insisted that, as his had the more renowned pedigree, Cormac should balance things by bestowing on Molly fifty pounds more than he intended.

At length the match was fixed—Molly to have a hundred pounds, a cow, a calf, and household linen; and yourself the five acres promised, a trig house built on it, and the venerable Spreckly into the bargain. When you walked home alongside your father that night, your step was very springy and your head held very high, and you felt yourself a great deal bigger and stouter and stronger than ever you thought yourself before. It dawned upon you that you were a man now. Your eyes were looking far into the future. With five acres and a hundred pounds, and, above all, with a girl like Molly, small wonder your look was bright and brave and hopeful.

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God bless the both o' you, and have ye in his keeping!

III. YOUR WEDDIN'

Thus you courted before you wedded. No one did otherwise barring Big Patrick MacHugh of the Hill-Head who, finding the season too throng* to waste any of it courting, sent, as substitute, little Terry MacMullen of the Alt. With the result that Terry, putting in one word for Big Patrick and three for himself, won the wife and left Big Patrick as lonesome and as throng as he deserved to be for the remainder of his days.

Yes, you courted before you wedded, and in choosing your sweetheart chose wisely and tastefully as well. You did not, like Manus MacRoary, merely look for a fine-looking father-in-law whom you'd be proud to meet in the market under the neighbours' eyes. And neither did you, like the Braggy Bachelors, seek a girl who "had good wear in her"—one modelled like the milk-churn, same diameter all the way. No more, on the other hand, had you any use for the other pattern, the kind who'd keep you breathless for fear she'd break in the middle. No, you just chose Molly Gilbride because she was as

*Busy

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graceful as the mountain-ash, as blithe as a bird, and had a countenance like a May-day's dawn—because she was a sweet simple mountainy girl, winsome as a fairy, and full of goodness as an egg's full of meat. And you wedded her just because she was the finest and best and prettiest and dearest girl in all the world. And your wedding, the greatest ever was, deserves a chapter all to itself.

As the Day-of-your-life was only three weeks away, you were the throngest man in the parish. You had to travel the Barony "bidding" your guests. And no one you dared to omit who carried a drop's blood that cried "friend" to your family—even if he disgraced that drop, for blood is stronger than steel in Donegal. Moreover, in person, you had to trudge to him on foot, though he lived leagues away more than you could count—and had to eat at his house—and at every house of thirty in the same day—eat at each a meal that would shame a mowster.* And you had to hearken (but it was now no bother to hearken to anything under Heaven) to the leagues-long advice of all the wives in the parish, and write on your memory their own prize prescription for married happiness—all which prescriptions, with marvellous unanimity, tallied in their constant ingredient: "Always

*Mowing hay is heavy work, and great entirely would have to be the meal a mowster would shame at consuming.

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take your wife's advice." This unanimity was positive proof of the prescription's soundness.

You had to allot a considerable portion of your time to Taig the Tailor—a day with him in Donegal Town while he chose the cloth for you, the best ever cut off a web; and a day with him getting your measure; and many a night after, sitting on his board watching the stitches as they went in. A dissipation, maybe, cold-blooded people would call this, instead of a duty; but you felt certain that some stitch would run the wrong way on that suit if you didn't watch the work fixedly for at least two hours every night. And you never found the task tiresome. But then of course the stress on you was relieved by the compliments every incomer paid you on the quality of the cloth (after he had fingered it and tugged it and tested a thread in the candle-flame), and the uniqueness of the pattern, and the elegance of the cut, and assured you that you wouldn't have a tooth inside your head or a hair outside it, when that suit was worn out. It was plain to be seen that there wasn't another suit in the world like this was going to be. If ever you had a shadow of a doubt that your wedding suit was to be the first and finest ever left a tailor's lap-board, it quickly vanished before the wand that true friendship wielded.

No less than three houses were to be put under

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the wedding party. Molly's father's, and Maurice Quigley's and Andy Hegarty's who neighboured together—and her father's big barn, moreover, for the dinner and the dance. And all three families were scrubbing and painting and turning the house inside out, day and night without ceasing. And the chimneys of the countryside reeked (reminding Yankee McGragh, he said, of Pittsburg) with broiling and boiling and cooking and baking—hams and lambs and chickens and geese—against the famous appetites of the weddin'eers, till it looked like there wouldn't be a living thing running on two legs barring the weddin'eers themselves when the wedding was over.

'Twas all needed—and more, if the truth were told. There were a hundred and fifty couples at that wedding, if there was a pair; and every one of them seemed as if they'd been fasting a fortnight. All the world was there in fact barring its tailors and shoemakers, now dead from working day and night. Not to mention its dressmakers, who were past praying for entirely. For five miles in every direction, at an early hour, the hillsides began dotting with girls in their ribbons, and boys in their brogues and best broadcloth, who, as blithe as the larks above them and with hearts higher far, were headed for your house or Molly's that morning.

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And what a morning it was! Sure, the like of it never fell from the Heavens before—nor since. You never saw the sun shine the same as it did that morning. You never saw the cows in the meadow nor the calves in the paddock so playful, nor the colts on the hill kicking their heels so madly.

You never found the—the—the—oh, you couldn't tell what it was!—the something-or-other in the air the same as it was that morning. And there was a blue in the sky and a glimmer on the river, and a shimmer on the lake, and a smile over the hills that you never remembered seeing any other morning of all your life. It was surely curious, but all the world somehow seemed to sense that there was something extraordinary in the wind. You yourself were terribly restless and fidgetty, and your mother had a hard time entirely dressing you properly and tying bow-knots, two on your brogues and another on your neck, and trying to make your new suit lie down on you properly. She almost spent as much time on you this morning as she spent on your father every morning he went to Market or Mass. And a dozen times she said to you just as she used to him: "Och, Och, but it's the heartbreak you are entirely!"—every time adding, "May the Lord look down on the woman who's gettin' you!" But there was a something wet in her eyes all the same; pity, it must have meant, for



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the woman who was going to inflict herself with you.

The Groom's Party had now collected—not one couple less than five and fifty. The fiddlers, who had slept at your house the night before—sleep being a figure of speech on this occasion—headed the gay procession, and their beat wasn't to be found in the barony. Your mother showered you with holy water, and after a vain effort to keep up the sham of indifference, broke down and cried on your shoulder; while your father thought he hid his feelings behind a whack of his stick and a curt: "God bless you!" before you took your place with the Best Man, behind the fiddlers. And, two by two, the bravest Groom's Party the parish had seen in seven years set off—to meet at the Bridge of Aughrim the proudest Bride's Party seen in a century. But, since Adam was a caddy, there never was seen the like of the two together, when they joined and headed for Frosses chapel with four fiddlers' elbows going like steam-engines in front, fetching from the fiddles the last note that was in them, followed by upwards of a hundred couples of the comeliest boys and winsomest cailins the countryside knew—led by the proudest boy (though you say it yourself) and sweetest cailin ten times over of the collection—every boy of them strutting as if it was his day, and every cailin with tucked

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skirts, and folded shawl, blushing and smiling like a May morning, as wondering how soon she might be walking to her own wedding.

The sun—the brightest, more betoken, that ever shone—had come up over the shoulder of Bames Mór mountain in time to be with the party; the primroses by the roadside were smirking, and the daisies, shaking the dew off themselves, were letting on to look surprised (as if they'd never noticed the carryings-on between Molly and yourself), and the whin flower, running like a fire across the moor, was laughing for the fun of the thing. The larks above the heather were bursting their little breasts trying which of them would spill most joy on you, while the black-bird in the bush (the rascal!) did nothing that morning but twit you with “Molly! Molly! Molly Gilbride!” And when the party crossed the Ainey River by the stepping stones (the boys helping their girls to jump from the one big rock to the other), behold even the river had got hold of the black-bird's joke!

But you didn't mind!

Over the brown moors and down the green hill-sides and along the stony lanes and *casseys*, and across the black bogs (where *cean-a-bhans* nodded a million white heads), trooped the glad countryside—the rheumatic old woman racing with the barefoot boy—to get close view of you and tell you

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it was the purtiest party, and the bravest (God bless it!) the heather had ever bent to, and to shower the pair of you with prayers that gave the angels an ache in their arm putting upon record. Though more than half the crowd, dumbfounded with dint of admiration, could only shake their heads and cluck their tongues for wonder beyond words. The open-mouthed onlookers, lining the route, had wonderful taste, for they one and all agreed that radiant Molly was the winsomest bride and you the comeliest groom they'd ever seen walk the way! But after all, sure how could they help acknowledging it? 'Twas a picture worth walking forty miles on one's bare knees to see. With folded skirts showing neat ankles and striped petticoat, her grandmother's cashmere shawl on her arm, and no covering whatsoever to hide her handsome head and keep the light of morning from her eyes, Molly had no peer. And as for yourself—well, you modestly tie your tongue. Only, you'll not call the neighbours liars. But you will say that when he tied the knot, Father Dan (who was never sore on compliments) in the hearing of all confessed that he'd given his blessing to more than one uglier pair.

If there was anything ever equalled the beauty of that morning, it was the joy of the evening. It wasn't the young in years alone collected at the

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house, chatting and story-telling and leaping and boxing and boasting, but the young-hearted likewise, and the bulk of them younger than the young, as they proved before morning. For the youths of three and four score who came to your wedding ranged themselves with Long John Mac Ardle, a sprightly youth of eighty-eight, when he stated that the only man he wouldn't knock down for calling him old would be the man who'd put sods on his coffin. And women young and old were there in flocks, wondering at the splendour of the wedding arrangements, admiring the linens, and marvelling at the delft, and "tchuck-tchucking!" in admiration of the knives and spoons, fingering Molly's dress, praising it, and so ceaselessly worshipping the blushing girl's beauty that 'twas a God-send she wasn't given to apoplexy.

Three houses were under the party—not to mention the barn; and you'd wonder where under the stars the two mothers could collect so many assistants with white aprons as were darting hither and thither with a fork or a spoon or a bowl of milk in their hands, and a look on their face as if the world's wheels would stop whirling unless they did their duty—and tripping one another up and knocking one another down and upsetting everyone else who came in their way. And Molly's mother and yours indulged themselves with the luxury of the

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most care-worn faces they could accommodate, and heartily agreed in the hearing of every one that weddings were bothersome, and 'twould be well for the world if there was a stop put to them entirely.

Haystacks of hams and lambs and sides of bacon were built on seven tables in the barn, balanced by back-burdens of chickens and ducks and geese, not to mention mountains of potatoes laughing through their jackets, and seas of sauce you might swim in. The sight of lashin's and leavin's of all eatables and drinkables made the party feel as hungry as if they'd been fasting a fortnight. Father Dan, poor man, who held the head of the table, worked like a warrior tryin' to serve them fast enough. And, poor man, himself fared the worst that day, and must have fattened on his fun. Not less than nineteen women were piling plates on him at the same time; and the sweat-drops on his forehead were bigger than the rosary beads in his pocket while he carved meat by the mile for half the world. But double the work wouldn't hinder Father Dan from hailing his jokes on all corners of the house. And in such merry uproar did he keep the tables that Reddy Hanlon, trying to manage a laugh without missing a mouthful, choked three times before the dinner was done; and Ned the Thrasher had to flail him like a flounder on the back to drive the bite up or down—half killing him

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in order to cure him. But 'twas only another joke from Father Dan that made Reddy every time consent to cough up the mouthful. And the good man's jokes were so clever that the man who was hit hardest always laughed the heartiest, and held higher his head for the night's remainder, since he was now honoured forever. But sure his jokes fell—as himself said—like the rain of Heaven, on both the just and the unjust, so that at the night's end not a soul could ask: "How was Father Dan spited that I should be slighted." And, och sure what would a weddin' dinner be—the best o' them, even yours—without the delightful Father Dan whose peer you couldn't find from Farramore to California!

The Masther to be sure—Masther O'Doherty of the Eskar School, who had the second post of honour facing Father Dan—did the brunt of what work Father Dan didn't find time for. And in his own learned way, he did no small part to make yourself proud and everyone happy. It was a priceless privilege to see him play with the appalling words in the dictionary as airly as if they were so many children's marbles. And when Father Dan cracked a joke on him, he almost gave back better than he got. Leastwise, each word of his reply was as big as five of Father Dan's. For even the littlest children that crowded the door and

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squatted on the floor, and packed the barn's waste spots, could understand Father Dan's jokes. To crown it all the Masther was a born poet and a singer—suffering since childhood (he used to dazzle all the old women and you by declaring) from a curious complaint he named *furor poeticus*, from the grips of which he never failed to come out without a new and very learned song. And he delighted the house, and dazzled yourself, and dumbfounded poor Molly by arising in his place, the dint of the dinner being over, and singing a song he said he had prepared for the occasion (in the course of his last attack), "Sweet Molly Machree."

THE MASTHER'S SONG

"All for recreation, and sweet meditation,
And perambulation, one mornin' in May,
As bright Sol ascended, my footsteps I wended
Where's hawthorn's suspended, and mantled my
way:

On my eyes dawned a vision—an angel Elysian,
All fairer than Helen, it was that met *me*;
Supremely more modest than princess or goddess—
Her appellation was Molly, sweet Molly
Machree!

"In the luxuriant bushes harmonious thrushes,
And gay birds of passage did guilelessly sing;

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Their incense and fragrance, in odorous radiance,
The flowers circumambient did gorgeously fling.
Said I: 'Is this Hebé, or Venus' self maybe?

Or some other potentate of high degree?'
But, no 'twas a maiden, sublunar, love-maiden—
Her appellation was Molly, sweet Molly
Machree!

"It's *my* affirmation, her cheeks were carnation,
Her bosom's inflation a bower of bliss;
The robin's adjoining were longing and pining,
Their pretty beaks watering, her sweet lips to
kiss.

Her step all so stately, her form so sedately,
Contiguous she drew, and advanced unto me;
My heart loudly trembled, my tongue it dis-
sembled—

Her appellation was Molly, sweet Molly
Machree!

"Great Sol in his lustre, the stars in a cluster,
The Emperor Augustus compare not at all
With the intoxication, amaze, and elation,
And *the* consternation that did me befall.
And that fair enslaver of renowned behaviour,
And be-at-ific visage contiguous to me,—
This vision resplendent—my peace of mind ended!
Her appellation was Molly, sweet Molly
Machree!"

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And when the beautiful song was sung, and the rafters rang to the cheering of the enchanted company, Molly, blushing like a sunset, hid her head with dint of confusion, while you took her hand, and, acting for her, said: "May God forever bless you, Masther O'Doherty." All through the festivities, it was Molly's endeavour and your own (which, more betoken, both of you very nearly succeeded in) to keep the quietest in the house, acting as if you'd dropped into somebody's wedding. And, indeed, with Father Dan and the Masther guiding the fun, and the father and mother of both o' you well seconding them, there was little left for you to do but look on and be glad-hearted.

But surely everyone did his part, and the part of five besides, even before the dancing began. And for the dancing, after fifty handy fellows had flung the tables and chairs from the barn and strung ready-made seats of fir-logs around it, the fiddlers and pipers were perched upon home-made pedestals, where they resined their bows, and scraped their fiddles, and squeaked their chanter, and enquired what was wanted—till the Masther himself, taking the floor with the comliest *cailin* he could find, demanded the reel, "The Ladies o' Carrick," the first rousing bar of which set something dinnling in the heels of every mortal present. And sixty brave couples were on the floor, curtsying

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to each other before you'd say "Whack!" and next minute, to the finest music ever flowed from fiddler's box or piper's bag, were running the finest reel ever delighted the eye of an Irishman.

And that began the fun that didn't find its end till morning.

But 'twasn't on the dance alone the mirth and merriment depended. Light hearts were as plenty there as light heels—and Terry Mac Gowran was ready to swear that every soul present must have been whetting his wits for a fortnight. 'Twas like the corn stalks to the shearing hook on September day the way those jokes cracked thick and fast. Like so many princes scattering their gold, the fiddlers and pipers on their thrones were flinging their jokes broadcast to the joysome crowd. Only, faith, this crowd, proving itself not poverty-stricken either, returned as good as it got. Wit in fact was in the air, and terribly catching. It smote the dullest dunce—if a dunce was there—and made wags of the gravest, while the real wits were transformed to wonders. Billy the Blade, doubled up in one corner, with a tongue like a razor, and Phil the Fiddler, whose humour, like the Well of Warra Mor, never ran dry, and Larry-come-lately, in the other end of the house, who'd never met his match in *sconcing* (bantering) yet, kept the fun-ball fly-

YOUR WEDDIN'

ing, and every one in the house gave it a push as it passed him.

There were as pretty dancers there as ever beat a floor, and to watch them was a treat worth travelling for. This pair and that won words of commendation plenty, and hearty shouts of praise raised high above the din; but final judgment wasn't to be given till, after the choicest pairs had proved themselves in the general dance, they'd, pair by pair, get fair play and a free floor to show to all which *was* the best. Then the excitement ran so high all round the house that, when the fanciest couples of them took the floor and curtsied to the fiddlers, 'twas well no onlooker was acquainted with heart-disease. The thunders of delight each well-danced brace drew from their backers at sitting down, should shake the stars you'd think. But each pair footed it so beautifully that all confessed their peers were far to find, and pairs that could outmatch them nowhere—till the next two took the floor and, curtsying to the fiddlers, called their tune, and started in to shame them that had sat down. And every other couple won such cheering as made the rafters crack, till it would take cooler-headed, colder-hearted people than any there that night to say which pair was beaten.

And 'twas then yourself and Molly, both of you

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mighty shy indeed, and Molly blushing like a poppy-field, stood up, and, hand in hand, bowed to the fiddlers, while the house caught its breath. And, to the notes of "The Geese in the Bog," both of you were next minute footing it so fleetly that there wasn't any more doubt who should win the night's laurels. Though you tell it yourself, who maybe shouldn't, you *will* say that you with your own proud steps and Molly with her unmatched dainty ones, her feet twinkling like the wimples in the river, cut a copy which the boys and girls of Knockagar would long remember. And down you sat, happy-hearted both, beneath your load of fame.

Little you dreamt that there was better dancer than you in the barn—just waiting to shame you—and a fleeter foot than Molly's. 'Twas little at that moment any mortal there suspected it. But you weren't well seated, and everyone wringing the arms of the two of you, when a shout of delight went up that startled you, and you beheld your father leading out Molly's mother—the pair o' them beginning with a bow to the fiddlers that hadn't been beaten that night! And when, to the tune of "Tatther Jack Walsh," they ran the reel like youngsters, and leathered the floor like nineteen, your father grown lithe as a rowan tree and with head every inch as high, and Molly's mother's eyes star-bright while her feet went twinkle! twin-

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kle! the way they used to forty years ago, and the barnful roared their delight, the old ones crowing for triumph, and shaking their sticks in the air ready for a scrap—you had to confess (and no thanks to you) that the palm had gone from you, and that this night after all was the night of the youths of three score. They who had congratulated you now sympathized with you. And they wrung the hands of your father and Molly's mother till their wrists ached, and slapped them on the backs till they nigh broke their hearts. And your father and Molly's mother proclaimed to the house: "'Twould be a low-come-down day with us when we'd sit by and see our own childer best us." Adding, to the exultation of the old and the resignation of the young: "But sure small blame to the youngsters: there's no dancin' nowadays like the dancin' used to be," while everyone of their compeers said, as they shook their gray hairs: "Faith, and them's true words." Still you were only too pleased to give the palm publicly to them who'd proved themselves your betters by *leagues*.

Both Molly and yourself were mighty proud of this, the wonderfulest wedding that ever was witnessed. Peadar Dall, the blind piper, in all seriousness told you that he'd never played over a finer-looking floorful. And Phil the Fiddler said that, though he had been scraping the fiddle strings for

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nigh sixty years, he never looked over a prouder lot of boys and a modester, winsomer gathering of girls, or a creditabler crowd of old and young alike, than he now had the privilege and pleasure of observing.

“ ’Tis a proud pair you ought to be in troth,” said Terry MacGowran. “If I was guaranteed such a weddin’, I’d marry the morra meself, nor bother who’d be the bride.” And the youngsters of four score, sitting around the walls, and thrilling like two and twenty, assured you that, though they went to weddings since they were *that* high, bound they were to confess that they’d never known a rale wedding before. And the youngest in the room told you he’d brag of this night to his grandchildren.

The gray of the morning had come and gone before your friends, after blessing the both of you, and praying more prayers for your future than would consecrate a church, set out for their homes happy-hearted, and singing against the birds of the morning.

But the song of the birds of the morning, though it was never sweeter, was like the crows’ cawing compared with the song that was singing in your heart and Molly’s, now that you faced the world as one.

WHEN A MAN'S MARRIED

IV. WHEN A MAN'S MARRIED

On the next Sunday—Bride's Sunday—a throng of the girls whom your bride had bidden, and a throng of the boys whom you had asked to the wedding, came to do their duty by accompanying you to Frosses chapel. Yourself and your bride, and the best man and the best maid walked in front, and your gathered friends brought up the rear. In the flagged chapel yard all the world waited to see you. And under all the world's eyes you walked very straight and proud, and Molly walked modest and blushing and shy. And all the world praised the pair o' ye again—and agreed that no comelier pair had ever walked the flags o' Frosses.

After chapel the bridesmaid brought you to her house for her treat—dinner, tea, and the spending of the evening. And from that time forward you were as busy as nailers attending treats given in your honour by all the nearer friends and relations of you both. The pair of you were now the pets of the parish, and your outgoings and incomings formed the fashionable intelligence of the countryside.

Three months afterwards, however, there was another wedding—a new bride and groom were given the parish to play with—and Molly and you,

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almost petted beyond usefulness and feasted to surfeit, were now relegated to the ranks of the old married couples, and settled down, thankfully enough indeed, to the new life and new conditions.

You worked your little farm early and late, and came home in the evenings to a happy fireside. You had peace, plenty, and content—and a wife beyond compare. By-and-bye, when there was multiplication in the mouths that had to be fed, you felt for the first time the limitations of your farm. Then, to supplement its profits, you began taking an occasional day's work from some farmer in the neighbourhood—a large farmer who owned twelve or fifteen acres. Returned from doing *his* work, you stole a couple of hours of the night to devote to your own little patch.

By-and-bye, again, when the increase in mouths was putting the multiplication table out of joint, and you began getting more and more deeply into the books of the meal-man—a pound or even more in his debt,—you felt the time had now come when you must go and cut the Scotch harvest. So, after leaving everything trig and snug, and all your crops growing grandly, and taking from Molly the red bundle she had done up for you, and kissing her good-bye, and putting a hook (sickle) under your arm, you joined the throng of men who came down the road

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one summer morning early, and with them walked the forty Irish miles to the port of Derry. A few shillings brought you to Scotland, where the harvest, so much earlier than yours, was already waiting for you, and where the big Scotch farmers had, for ten days past, been watching for you—for the thousands of you who reaped the harvest for them every year. All of your squad were engaged by one big farmer, passably well fed, and given plenty of clean sweet straw to sleep on in his empty barns. And, after five weeks' reaping of Scotland's harvest, you faced home again with four pounds in your pocket, over and above the few shillings necessary to pay your fare.

While you were away, Molly and the children had tended the crops at home and done to them everything that was needed. So, your own harvest was waiting for your sickle when you returned. As Molly and you were unaccustomed to the ways of correspondence, no letters whatsoever had passed between you while you were among the black strangers. But, because of the big gulf of silence, all the gladder was your greeting. You paid off your debts, and bought a calf for the balance. And Molly and you thanked God, saying you would never more be poor.

It was on the night of your return from the Scotch harvest that you discussed with Molly a sub-

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ject that had much occupied your mind during the weary weeks you walked among the alien corn—namely, what you were going to do with the children, God bless them! At present five of them were attending school in the little thatched school-house to which yourself had gone; but it was painfully plain to you both that, as soon as they could profitably help at home or be hired abroad, their school days must come to a close. The prospect wasn't a pleasant one—but there it was! One hope which your hearts had cherished—even before the first arrived—was that one of the priceless ones God gave you might be consecrated to Him, and that your last years might be lightened and your grey heads held high, for that a son of yours, from God's altar, spread his hands in blessing over bowed congregations. And when the first boy came, both of you had fervently besought God to aid you in what would be, for the time to come, your one great ambition—the making of a priest out of Patrick. On this night in question Molly and yourself, clasping hands, looked up to God and said that, with His holy help, your great hope should surely be fulfilled. You agreed that care, attention and solicitude should be centred upon Patrick; that he should never miss a day from school; and that, on getting home again, when the remainder of the children would go to do their part in

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the fields, no coarse work should fall to Patrick's lot: books and the comfort of the chimney corner should be his. It would be a tough struggle, you knew, to put him through college and find the great sum of money that would be wanted to finance him there—full fifty pounds a year, you were sure. But, with God's help always, it would be done. Molly would rear more hens and ducks and geese, and strive to keep another cow, and all of you would go without the luxury of butter henceforth, and the extravagance of eggs—except, of course, on Easter Sunday. Herself would work extra hard, early and late, and in spare moments spin another hank of yarn, or take up her sprigging-hoops and embroider a robe or a bed-cover that would win her several shillings. You, too, would double your working, and cut down your tobacco and manage a few weeks more of each season at cuttin' the Scotch harvest. And little Jimmy, Johneen Og and Larry would, in another couple of years, be fit for hiring out as herds in the rich country thirty miles away, and, a few years later, as able-bodied servants to the big farmers. So, when the time should come for Patrick to begin his colleging, Molly would have a brave penny in the stocking indeed. Thenceforward, too, the boys would be earning more and more. So that, please Heaven, the ambition of your lives was certain of fulfilment.

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Molly was a capital housekeeper, anyhow. It was her proud boast that she was the best butter-maker in the parish. The parish *had* to agree with her: for they all knew that she got a ha'penny a pound more for her butter than any other woman entering Donegal market. And, off the two cows which she used to keep, she was able to bring to the market more butter than most women who kept three. She was frugal and taught her frugality to the children. Yet did you all get your fill of good, nourishing, appetizing food—oatmeal stirabout with lashings and leavings of buttermilk for breakfast, and for dinner a pot of fine floury potatoes that, when spread steaming on the table, were laughing through their jackets at you, and calling to you to come on. Sometimes Molly could afford you even a fine bowl of buttermilk to kitchen the potatoes, and always plenty of salt—oftentimes pepper too. At Christmas and Easter you had fowl. You still, in fact, ate just as well as several of the neighbours, and yet managed to save money. At night, for supper, you had potatoes again—the sweetest ever a man put tooth in, lashings and leavings of them. On Sunday evenings you got a tea supper—and maybe, for each, a slice of white bread from the town. For a rarity you got that greatest gift of God to epicurean man—boxty-bread, made from the ever-loved potato by a tedious and labori-

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ous process. It was a longed-for luxury, beside which even the charms of baker's bread sank into insignificance. By spinning, knitting, and sprigging in her spare hours, Molly was able herself to provide the little flour, tea, sugar, and other small items that must be purchased from the shop. The potatoes, oatmeal and milk, the staple foods, were provided by yourselves; the butter and the eggs, and the pig and the calves that were sold, not merely paid the rent, the *cut*, and the poor-rate, and the priest's Christmas stipend (a small four shillings) and supplied you with clothes and boots, but also periodically furnished an important increment for the hoard in the stocking. All the wage-income went into the stocking unbroken. And when at last came that great day of mingled sorrow and joy when Patrick, with his lean carpet-bag, set out for college, the stocking was bursting.

Of clothes and shoes you didn't need much. But at the beginning of every winter you had the tailor, with his goose and lapboard, come to your house for a week, and fit the family in what they needed. And you had the shoemaker for a week, too. These you usually fetched to your house after your year's work was ended, and the haggard filled with hay, and your mind filled with peace. As the neighbours had *idle-set* then also, your house was the country's great gathering-place while tailor and

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shoemaker worked in it. It emptied not from ten in the morning till midnight. There were seldom less than sixteen or more than sixty of the neighbours with you. Seated in a circle around the tailor's board or the shoemaker's bench, they discussed all subjects under the sun—in particular, the newest hopes for poor Ireland. The shoemaker and the tailor were the politicians, of course, of the countryside. They bought *The Nation* every week, and read it from the first word at the top left-hand corner of the front page to the last word at the bottom right-hand corner of the back page—and could almost repeat by heart the Leader's latest magnificent speech. For the shoemaker and the tailor had most marvellous memory, particularly for matters patriotic.

The houses of the shoemaker and the tailor, too, when these worthies were not working for you or your neighbour, were the great gathering-places of the countryside. During the day the cheery forge, maybe, outdid them. The ring of the anvil, the glow of the flying sparks, the roar of the fire, and the sight of someone else sweating while you lolled in lazy luxury—were all most sweet to a man who seldom tasted sweets. After night, though, the sociability and neighbourliness and delightfulness of the circle of "Rakers" who foregathered in the tailor's and in the shoemaker's enticed you. That

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was your chief recreation. On Sunday, of course, for the three-mile journey to chapel, through bog and moor, you relaxed with the group of neighbours with whom you walked—or ran when you found the last bell ringing, and you not yet past Paddy McNeely's mearin'.

And the neighbours were neighbourly in the truest sense. In fact, you were all the one family. You sorrowed together, one with another, if a poor man's cow died; and again you all rejoiced for the joy of one. Any implement or convenience that you had for facilitating farm work was always at the call of any neighbour who needed it. And when a big day's work must be done—the taking in of your hay, or the getting home of your turf—you just put out the word in a general sort of way, and a dozen kindly neighbours came with the day-break, and everyone of them worked for two. That was one of the times at which Molly was lavish—gave tea after breakfast, a fish dinner, and tea and baker's bread after supper. To the poor widow-woman who was left with large care on her hands, and with small means, you all gathered occasionally, in a *meithil*, to give a great day's work—setting or sowing, turf-cutting or reaping.

When dread Death visited Cornamona and claimed one or other of you, all men dropped their spades in reverent sympathy with the family that

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was afflicted, and, however pressing were the crops' needs, none lifted spade or rake again till you had seen the green sod drawn over poor Micky, or little Mary, as the case might be. The ties of neighbourly love that bound you all were worthy of a better world.

The neighbours all rejoiced with you, of course, in the wonderful speed little Patrick was making at college. And when they said the Rosary at night, they always put up a prayer—one of many trimmings—for God to bless the brave boy and keep him in His care and speed him towards the grand goal for which he bravely struggled. Never-ending were the prayers of Molly and yourself for the same object. Your Rosary was never wound up, during years and years, without five *Paters* and *Aves* being chorused for God's blessing on the young hero sixty miles away.

In your house, as in all the houses, the Rosary was recited nightly by the whole household, kneeling in a circle. Molly made you lead it, while she and the children devoutly chorused response. The Rosary hour was a peaceful hour, and it brought you all very near indeed to God. The hum of the Rosary was sweet and beautiful to those who, passing the way, uncovered their heads in reverence, and felt they were treading sacred ground while still that music was in their ears. Although you

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led the Rosary, Molly could never trust you with the trimmings. These, Herself always did take charge of. For 'twas she, and she alone, who knew how to pour out the heartfelt poetic petition which prefaced each *Pater* and *Ave* asking for benefits spiritual and temporal for yourselves and your friends and neighbours, and for all the world—and an especial petition for all poor sinners who had no one to pray for them. Lucky, indeed, was the mortal who was particularized in Molly's prayers. Blessed were all who shared with your household the fruits of the nightly Rosary.

Molly had a deal of concern caring for the children; but with a heart-broken sigh she had to confess that you were ten times more bother than the helpless baby. You were a great worry to her, entirely. It took a deal of trouble and pains on her part to keep you neat, and trig, and a credit to her housewifery—especially when she was trigging you up for fair or market, or fitting you out for chapel. It took a deal of time and trouble to brush your coat and to shine your brogues so that you might see yourself in them (for 'twas a disgrace how *you* did your shoes); to button the white shirt front and fix it and the shirt-cuffs, so that every other man's wife in the parish might marvel at your wife's skill in starching; to put on your collar for

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you, and tie under your chin that flowing bow-knot whose manipulation was always an unfathomable mystery to you, and whose ends ever threatened to trip you. And when, at length, she turned you out of doors dressed, she took care to let you know you were a heart-scald. Yet you, callous fellow, smiled—for you knew that, if you were so mean as to look over-shoulder, you would catch her watching after you with a pride that glowed in her eyes.

If 'twas going to the market or fair you were, she overtook you before you were half a mile gone, herself now dressed—and looking a picture too,—and took charge of you thenceforward. She guided you to every place where you had business to do and, with the exception of buying and selling animals, did it for you. For, of course, you couldn't be trusted to do the triflingest thing for yourself without bungling. Or, if you didn't bungle, then at least the sharp ones were sure to take you in. She heaved a sigh of relief only when, untying her bonnet-strings and enumerating the pitfalls and swindles from which she had snatched you, she saw you safely seated in your own chimney corner—from which you should never stir without guidance. You inwardly thanked Heaven for the wonderful woman entirely it had given you, while you distributed *fairlies* from your pockets to the strug-

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gling mass of young humanity and hu-woman-ity who, in desperate battle around your knees, almost threatened to tear you limb from limb.

Yourself and Molly religiously observed, and in your children put respect for all the old customs and all the old festivals. On the fifth day of January you feasted the children in honour of Old Christmas Eve. On the first day of February you observed the feast of St. Brigid, bringing in with pious and dramatic ceremony the bundle of rushes, placing them under the table while the family supped a special supper, and then plaiting from them beautiful St. Brigid's Crosses which were stuck above every bed and every door in your dwelling house, and above the doors of your cattle-houses, to keep from ban and blight, for twelve months to come, all living things that slept or passed beneath. On May Eve you taught the children to gather the May flowers and with them strew the door-steps and window-sills in festive offerings; and you took great care upon that day to give no offence direct or indirect to the Gentle People, who, all invisible, were then plentifully around you. On Bonfire Night, with the sacred fire you circled cattle and crops. On Hallow Eve night you enjoyed the greatest feast of the year. And, two nights later, on All Souls' Night, the one night during which the souls of your dead kith

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and kin who suffered in Purgatory were allowed to come again to the homes and haunts and the dear ones they loved, your household at bedtime recited the Long Rosary for the relief of their suffering. And when the children went to bed, Molly cleaned and swept and tidied the house, as she would against the coming of any honoured visitor—brushing up the hearth and piling high a bright blazing fire, and setting chairs and stools in circle around it, for them who would come at midnight, and be gladdened to see that the living were still lovingly mindful of them.

You had no dowry to put on your one daughter Una; yet when Neill McGrath, a brave boy from the next parish, owning a comfortable farm, came to ask her and got her with your blessing and Molly's, he considered that he got great dowry with her in the gifts and graces that God and nature had given her, and in the skill in spinning, knitting, butter-making and housekeeping which Molly, the best manager in the parish, had cultivated in her. And Neill was right, too. Your son Larry, now come to young manhood, had placed his affections on a next-door neighbour's daughter and got a farm and fortune with her, though he, on his part, had nothing to offer only a clean heart, a fine frame, and a pair of brave and willing hands.

EVENING'S QUIET END

Jimmy would very soon take passage for America; while Johnen Og, who helped you at home, would heir the farm and wouldn't marry for five or six years yet—till all the others were settled and "done for." Patrick, brave boy, was now nearing the goal for which he had so long striven, and to which you had so long looked forward, and for which you had so well, and worthily, and untiringly worked.

At last, on that blessed and memorable morning on which, in Frosses chapel, you saw him in his golden, gleaming robes, turn to the congregation, and, a light from heaven shining on his fair young face, spread his arms above the bent multitude, saying solemnly "Dominus Vobiscum," yourself and Molly, kneeling amid hundreds of other hushed ones, took hands underneath her shawl, and, your eyes running tears, together bowed heads and hearts before God in soulful gratitude for that this day had crowned your married life with its crowning joy.

V. EVENING'S QUIET END

But 'tis now a long cry back to that glorious day of Patrick's ordination, when your married life was crowned with its crowning joy—yours and Molly's.

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

You were only just in your prime at sixty—both Yourself and Herself. And, even at seventy you were still a brave, hardy couple, every bit as young as the youngest of them. And you showed it to them, too, the pair of you, at the christening at Parrah Mor's, when, disgusted with looking at the young people of nowadays thinking they were dancing, you swept the loiterers from the floor in your righteous wrath, and leading out Molly as cavalierly as you had done on that very same floor half a century before, showed them what *real* dancing was, and only sat down when the fiddler, crying "mercy," let his paralyzed arm drop to his side. The speed of the dance brought the blush to Molly's cheek again and the gleam to her eye; and, looking at her, with her head tossed back and skirts held gracefully, while her feet went twinkle, you just saw the fresh-lipped *cailin* who half a century before had proudly paraded with you the Harvest Fair of Glenties. And when the fiddler collapsed, you took young Molly Gilbride in your arms and gave her a hearty kiss, while the thunderous applause threatened to bring the rafters down! By the hand, again cavalierly, you led the radiant Molly to her seat, and made her your best bow, and announced for the benefit of the nervous, beardless boys: "There's a copy cut for ye, lads. Fol-

EVENING'S QUIET END

low it, first and last!" But they daren't do either, for the house now scorned them, unworthy of the traditions of their fathers. Thenceforward it was a night jubilant and boisterous for the frisky youngsters of three and four score. And you and Molly, having done your part, sat around the walls with old-time comrades comparing historical notes, enthusing over long-gone days and deeds that were, and lamenting the pitiable little men and women whom Providence had now provided for filling your shoes—the tops of which they could barely see over! 'Twas sad and sad! But, somehow, it was a sort of sadness that brought with it inward elation, even if outward depression.

No matter. Yourself and Herself, as I said, were a brave, handsome couple at seventy. And no one ever even mentioned age to you till you passed your four-score mark. Indeed you had never dreamt that age could come to you: for both of you, somehow, as you did your share of work at seventy-five and seventy-eight, unwittingly took it for granted that you were children of *Tir na'n Oig*.* Molly still spun, and milked, and washed, carried great pots of potatoes to and from the fire, and tripped like the gayest of them six miles to the market with her basket of eggs on Saturday. You

*The Land of Everlasting Youth—the Gaelic paradise.

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

were yet able to give a lead to the most conceited young fellow of them all at the potato-setting or the turf-cutting or mowing of the hay.

Curious it was how the old age called on you at last. 'Twas on a Saturday night, after you had returned from your twelve Irish miles' walking and jumping to and from the Donegal market. You had got up extra early that morning, of course, and done your day's work back-loading manure to the South Park before you gaily took the hills for the town. There was a bit of a "halt" on you, you thought, as you returned from the market; but when you sat down in your own chimney-corner you stiffened entirely. Neill Moran was there to learn from you how the markets went; and to Neill you remarked that you didn't know from Adam what the stiffness was in your legs the night. Says Neill, says he: "I'll hould you a bad ha'penny 'tis 'the age,' Johneen. You know you turned the frosty side of four-score a while back." Your first impulse was to grip hold of your stick, and smash a handful of Neill's ribs for him. But that wouldn't have been hospitable in your own house. You only said some caustic things, and let him know 'twas ill his coming to your own house to insult you. And poor Neill went away much mortified, and all apology.

But when you thought it over as you tossed

EVENING'S QUIET END

sleepless through the night, and found yourself, on getting up in the morning, far from as nimble as you used to be, it struck you that there might be something in what Neill said after all. Molly, that night, confessed to you as you talked the matter over that, in troth, she had been feeling a bit stiffish herself after coming home. Old Terry McMullan dropped in on Sunday night for to borrow from you the loan of a harrow, which he and his little grandson were going to pull the next day on the hazel-brae (because it was too steep and difficult for a donkey). With Terry's aid you plunged into chronology, and calculated that, as you were just five years of age the Night of the Big Wind, and as Molly was born midway between the Day of the Straws and the night the Sickymoore-tree fell at Tom Kerrigan's, you must be all of four-score years and five, and Molly just three more than four-score—barring a month more or less. "Well! well!" you at length conceded, "I suppose myself and Molly must be wearin' on in years, after all." And Terry McMullan sided: "Faith, Johneen, 'tishn't younger either of you'll be gettin' from this out." Both Molly and yourself nodded grave acquiescence. When you closed the door on Terry that night, and went back with a sigh and took your seat and your pipe in the chimney corner, opposite to Molly, who was gazing into the fire, you

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

were an old man looking across at an old woman, sure enough!

Well, God be thankit for His blessings and His mercies! Sure you had your day, and it was a good day and a full one. Why should you not now make way for your youngers and betters? Molly and yourself, brave hearts ever, were quickly reconciled to the new aspect of things. Moreover, Old Age, when ye got used to the thought, wasn't such a terror after all as it had looked at the first blush, the night Neill Moran threw it in your face. It had its compensations—its own joys and gratifications. Henceforward, extra care was bestowed on you, extra respect tendered to you. You had your pipe and your ease in your own chimney corner when you chose; and Molly her ease and her snuff-box in the opposite corner. But you didn't always choose this. For the most part, you fought Old Age a good, stiff, stand-up fight, for you weren't the build of a man who could bear to drop his hands to his side while still a splank of the old fire remained unquenched. You still went to the field, spade over shoulder or scythe on arm, and worked foot for foot with the youngest of them. Only, you didn't now go out till after breakfast, and during the day you had more frequent occasion to light your pipe and sit to smoke. Very soon they half-dissuaded, half-coerced you into dropping both

EVENING'S QUIET END

the spade and the scythe, and wielding instead a shovel and a rake. You didn't know why they should do it, and strenuously objected; but the weight of public opinion broke your resolution. By-and-bye, to your disgust, they took the shovel and rake from you, and gave you a stout hazel-staff, with which implement the cleverest of them couldn't work wonders in a hay-field or a potato-patch. After experimenting for months with the stick you discovered that its use was to herd and drive cattle—and help a man climb over a fence, too. Little by little, it dawned upon you that you were in the way in the work field, both because you were too old and the world was too new. Modern ideas, which did not harmonize with yours, were creeping in there, and at your time of life, where was the use raising a row about it? Anyhow, you were needed for nursing at the fireside now; for there was none could better soothe and please Larry's little children, and none they were fonder of than yourself and Molly. You had riddles and guesses unending to keep them amused and amazed for the length of a summer's day and a winter's night, and sweet, crooning old songs and ballads which were in esteem when you were young; and stories—oh, such stories!—stories of ghosts and of fairies and of the wonderful giants of old—entrancing stories that the spellbound children

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

could listen to for a lifetime, and with their last breath be still begging for more! Yes, your stories were both inimitable and inexhaustible. You were now one of the great *Shanachies** of the countryside. It was not little children alone who loved to listen to your stories, but big children likewise, some of them six feet high. You fascinated the gray children as easily as the green. Those were wonderful tales that you had in your repertoire surely, and it was well known that you could never tell yourself out. Besides, none of your stories ever knew what it was to be confined between the two covers of a book. Neither were they made yesterday. Through your father, and his father's father, and so on backward for some thousands of years, had been handed down to you this rare heritage of grand old tales. A thousand times on a winter's night, when they knew you would be story-telling, the neighbours, both young and old, gathered from far and near, crowding your house to listen once again to the astounding adventures of the brave King of Ireland's Son, or to the side-splitting tricks of tricksome Jack, the lucky, witty son of the poor widow woman, or to the magic romance (which it took three of the longest nights in winter to tell) of the wonderful wanderings of the King of Connacht's Thirteen Sons. The whole house

*Story-tellers.

EVENING'S QUIET END

held their breath as you came to your climax, till the wonder was that some of the more excited of them didn't burst entirely.

To add to the charm of your story-telling every single word of every single tale, as both yourself and your audience well knew, was real truth. And every single happening, just as you had heard it from your grandfather and retold it, actually and really happened—in the wonderful, mystical, magical old, old times. Therein lay the great value of your stories. On a night when the *bacach* (wandering beggarman) arrived at your house, and made himself at home there till morning, the word went like moor-fire over the country-side, and your kitchen was quickly crowded with the crowd that came to hear the pair of you tell stories one against the other, till either exhaustion or daybreak put an end to what seemed an unendable contest.

Your power as a *Shanachie* was always invoked at wakes in the kitchen, when the night needed cutting; for time always went on wings, they said, when you were story-telling. You were great at wakes, anyhow, and you never missed one within a radius of five miles. When you entered the wake-house, sympathetically shaking the hand of the bereaved one, you said, as customary, with down-cast eyes: "Mary" (or "Neill," as the case might be), "I'm sorry for your trouble," getting reply:

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“Thanky, Johnen, I know it. But it’s a trouble that must meet all of us, God prepare us for it!” Then, proceeding to the door of the room where the corpse was stretched, you knelt down and with bowed head prayed three Pater-and-Aves for the soul of the departed one. A flutter now ran around the gathering, for all knew now that they would be treated to something more than usually interesting. When you had prayed your prayer, and had taken your seat among the young men and women of only sixty, who envied you for your mature years, you were called on to reckon the age of him that was dead. That set the wheels of memory working; and, as on all such occasions it worked aloud, rambling over a deal of mighty fascinating ground, all the house hung on your soliloquy. Having calculated the age of the deceased, synchronizing the various crises and phases in his life with other notable parish events, you then, at the instigation of some of the cronies present, calculated the ages of every one in the countryside whose age had heretofore seemed incalculable, and entrancing reminiscence became the order of the night. Reminiscence ran riot round the house, and young and old were whirled into the Maelstrom. Every doubt, however, was referred to you—or to yourself and Molly, in case Herself was also present—and your verdict was unques-

EVENING'S QUIET END

tioned. Your position was an enviable one. You were a proud man, and no wonder. "Yes," you acknowledged, in your vainglory forgetting the stiffening body on the bed, "'tis a grand thing to be an old man."

A very grand thing—the proof is being forced on you at every turn. The young reverence you, the middle-aged venerate and admire you. At your own fireside, or at the fireside of the stranger, at the cross-roads or in the chapel-yard, every ear is pricked to get your comment on the subject under discussion. Your views on politics and politicians must be the correct views. You can by your slightest word exalt the fallen man, and by a mere shake of the head tumble from his tuppenny pedestal the hero of the hour. You quickly convince your audience that politics are not what they used to be; there's too little *do* and too much *say* in Ireland now. In your day you aimed to argue politics in a different fashion. To "the pathos of a pike and the logic of a blow" you pinned your faith. Young men sigh and vainly wish that old days and old ways would come again.

When Dan Timoney and Conal Moohan dispute about the possession of a turf bank, or Condry Dorian claims a right-of-way which Mattha Cannon denies, or Murty Molloy asks additional dowry for his wife when he discovers—too late—that she's

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

a bad butter-maker; it is to you the disputants come for decision. And your word is law—as much because of the honour due to age, as the superiority of wisdom that must accompany it. All questions of genealogy, chronology, and history are referred to you for settlement. If a stranger, purporting to be learned, comes into the parish, it is artfully contrived to bring him through the fire of your presence, and the neighbours watch you narrowly to see how he has stood the test. If friends quarrel, or there be a family fall-out, it is of course your duty to go to them, hear both sides, gently reprove all parties, and make them shake hands in your presence and promise to be henceforth nearer and dearer than ever to one another. When you speak at a gathering, all pause to listen—the very young watching their elders to see how they take your words, and their elders watching you with the utmost reverence. Against the spirit of scepticism, that, even in your remote world, would, if it dared, lift its head, you bravely and scathingly do battle. You vindicate tradition, and uphold beliefs that came to you sanctified by the centuries. If, at one of your astonishing illustrations, any cynic in the company so far forgets himself as to smile, the elder most convenient to him forthwith knocks him down. The slighted ghost has reason to be grateful to you; the fairy has in you a champion indomi-

EVENING'S QUIET END

table; and all the beautiful old beliefs of your people are secure while you walk abroad.

And the fairies recompensed you. All men saw that. For you were lucky in everything you turned your hand to. The world went well with you. And your children's children were bringing honour to your gray hairs, and joy to your soul. That you had never known pain or ache was of course not a personal fairy favour, for there wasn't a couple, lucky or unlucky, in the country-side, who couldn't say the same of themselves. There was indeed a family over the border of the parish, whose grandfather the doctor had attended three times, and the tongue of scandal told it against them yet. And yet you had worked out in the fields, summer and winter, wet and dry, and had often come home from a day's work in the ditches with the seven streams of Egypt running from your clothing, sat down to a hearty supper, and then gone "raking" to a neighbour's house, sitting in his corner for the lee-long night with a reek like that of a burning turf-stack ascending the chimney from your rain-sodden clothes, causing the *bean-a-tighe** to remark that you were damp, and yourself slightly to reply that you'd be dry before the new day. And the man who would have suggested changing your clothes would have been

*Woman of the house.

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

looked at by everyone as if he had two heads on him! Thanks be to Heaven, even now in your old age, you knew very little of pain or ache either—barring, maybe, the distant rumble of the rheumatiz in your bones, which made your son Larry and his wife insist that neither Herself nor yourself should get up in the morning. You had first laughed at this preposterous proposal, and then stormed. But Molly consented to take breakfast in bed. By-and-bye you were seduced to the luxury also, and actually found it good. You would have your breakfast and a draw of the pipe, and then turn over for another snooze, before getting up and getting into your duds, and beginning to nurse and croon to the children, or potter about the house and the haggard. You turned up, though, for all the other meals, whereat the tit-bits were singled out for you. You now helped to break Molly's spirit, inducing her to accept coddling, and thus paved the way for your own downfall. You were being coddled yourself directly, and were luxuriating in it. Without putting it into words, yourself and Herself—each nursing one of Larry's littlest children—acknowledged to each other across the fire that slipping into age wasn't such an unpleasant thing after all. At bedtime, as usual, you led the Rosary. That was a prerogative you never resigned. But the nearer you approached dissolu-

EVENING'S QUIET END

tion, the longer did you draw out the trimmings and the more plentiful were the petitions you put up, not for yourself and Molly alone, but for God's protection and blessing on all the dear and loved ones who must very soon be left without your protection.

You had well turned four-score and ten when at length you dissolved, leaving behind you Herself, on whom you bestowed the last lingering, loving look—a look, too, that plainly said: “Come soon, *a cuisle mo chroidhe*.*”

A great wake you had surely. Your thousand friends came from far and near to smoke a friendly pipe at your house, and to pray a prayer over you, and sit for some hours by your bier, lamenting that the parish would never see your likes again. And the funeral was something that would have delighted the heart of you, had you only been able to see it. In relays of four, the finest men of the parish shouldered you over bog and moor, hill and dale, road and river, to your final field, with five hundred footing it behind. And when you were lowered to your long home, and Father Peter, in shaky tones, had committed you: “Earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes,” the boys who filled your grave and *scrawed* it, said with the last sod: “With all our sorrow, we’re

*O Pulse of My Heart!

YOURSELF AND HERSELF

proud. For from this day out 'twill be our boast that we planted the best man Killymard ever knew. God rest you, Johneen!"

And a hundred bowed heads muttered a deep and fervent "Amen!"

THE LORE YOU LOVED

IN all the world again was no lore so lovely, belief so beautiful, or faith so powerful, as that of you and yours at Knockagar, where the spirit world touched earth, and its people mingled with men.

Not only were the Gentle People with you everywhere and always, but your affectionate dead, grown homesick in Heaven, came back to see and feel, to advise and to console. And among your holy hills the old saints, scattering blessing, often walked again. And sometimes the Angels passed as *shuilers*; and even the Christ himself in beggar's rags leant over your half-door—asking alms or your roof's shelter—just to find for Himself whether you were forgetting.

Your homely lore a learned world would probably despise. But well you know that whatever of solid work is in you, you owe to that lore whereon you were suckled, and on which, through time of youth and riper manhood, your soul as well as your fancy fed. Whether it was of love, or faith, or humour, or beauty, or just simply joy, from every one of the lovely legends that were

THE LORE YOU LOVED

as thick as caoran-berries on the hills, you learnt some lesson, little or big.

How could you help it? Sure they were, everyone of them, as delightful and as useful as, say:

THE RETURN OF RAFTERY

'Twas a man Raftery was, as well as a fiddler, and the first and best of both that ever stepped in shoe leather. And there never walked the world a man with manlier notions in his heart. And och, sure the wailin' o' the wind was in his fiddle, and the sighin' o' the sae, and the whisperin' o' the *Sidhe** among the sallies, and the mire-snipes complainin' on the moor. The loneliness o' the bogs was in it, and the loveliness o' the sky and the whistlin' o' the blackbird and the singin' o' the lark, the throopin' o' the fairies and the beat of their ten times ten thousand little feet at the moonlit dance on the rath.

Like the wind among the reeds, his music bent and turned what way it liked the crowds that always followed. And the lowest heart was lifted, and the proudest was made meek, and the hardest he could melt like snow in May. Men would tramp from Ireland's ends to hear him play; for his fame filled every foot of ground between the Four Saes—and they forgot hunger and thirst and

*The Gentle People.

THE LORE YOU LOVED

hot and cold, while the spell of his music was on them and the ring of his fiddle echoin' and re-echoin' down the stairways of their hearts. Though the richest in the land he well might be, a tattered coat was the best he wore. Money he despised. "Love, love," his one great theme, was all he saw and all he cared for, all that filled the "world star high" for him.

And Love it was, his soul's delight, that brought him from beyond the grave to the weddin' of Jack MacDermott and Mary.

And they had love and only love, brave Jack and winsome Mary, that night they married. Four bare walls they returned to from the chapel, and the cold water and the misty outlook entirely. But sure 'twas little they minded that, when marry for love they did. Miser MacGroarty of the Hillhead, Mary had refused—with all his lands and strands and cows galore. And Nancy Moore of Murvagh, with her hundred pounds and seven heifers and two chests of linen, who'd come at the raisin' of his little finger, Jack bravely turned his back upon to marry Mary.

So here they were alone and lonely in their little cabin this weddin' night, when 'twas making merry with them all the worl' should be. Alone and lonesome aye—for all the wise ones were disgusted with them both for that they threw away

THE LORE YOU LOVED

the God-sent chance of wealth and comfort—the heifers and gold of Nancy Moore, and the miser's lands and strands and score o' cows; for throwin' away these splendid chances as if they mattered not, and marryin' in haste like the fools they must be, without even a month's potatoes at their back. The truth was what the wise ones wouldn't see and couldn't see that, for fear the world's wisdom would make them marry gold, they flew the temptation quick, and married love—which disgusted all the wise ones, and left the lovers as they were, lonesome but lovingful, on this their weddin' night.

The latch was lifted and into the floor to them stepped a bent old man with a fiddle under his greeny-black coat, wishin' them God's blessin' and takin' the seat that Jack pulled to the fire for him.

"A long way I've come," said the fiddler. "It's hungry I am and I'll thank you good people for a bite of supper."

"Ha! Ha! Ha!" laughed both of them together. "Is it supper ye want? Why, though we're just married this day ourselves, we've to sup upon love. Yet, in troth, if we'd anything more fillin' for the stomach, welcome you or any other stranger would be with a heart and a half to a big share o't."

"What!" said the stranger. "Is it marry for love you did, and nothin' to put in the pot?"

THE LORE YOU LOVED

"That same," says they. "Ha! Ha! Ha! And now we'll pay for it."

"But it's cheap at the price," said Mary.

"It's cheap at the price," said Jack.

"God bless you," said the fiddler, who was watchin' under his brows. "Then you mustn't be the losers. Did you ever hear tell of Raftery?" says he.

"Raftery! Sure, 'tisin't jokin' us you are! For there's not one in the world exceptin' the deaf and dead who didn't hear tell of the great Raftery."

Then the old fiddler laid the fiddle and bow across his knees, and he said: "Send word to the neighbours to come and bring their marriage presents—the best of everything—for Raftery's here to play for the weddin'."

"Raftery!" they both shouted together when their speeches returned to them.

"Raftery, I'm he," said the fiddler, resuming his fiddle. The world's wants melted like the mists off the mountains, and the hearts o' them were lifted to the roof tree! Like moor afire, the news swept the countryside that Raftery, the great Raftery, of whom even the babies in the cradle had heard, and a few of the fortunate ones had seen, was at Jack MacDermott's and Mary's to play for the weddin'! And the country-

THE LORE YOU LOVED

side lost its head and left its work, and, forgetting its grudge, gathered up wedding presents the best, and hied itself to the weddin'-house. Barney Brian brought a side of bacon, and Jimmy Mac-Daid a leg of mutton. Eamonn Og came bent two-double under a bursting sack of potatoes, and Mrs. McCailin like a mountain, her arms filled with beddin'. The linens that Molly MacArdle brought were outmatched only by the flannels of Siorcha Ruadh, the firkin of butter from Paddy the Ghost, and oat-cakes to use it on from little Roisin Higgarty. Even the Bacach Beag brought his present of sugar and tea. And to the world's wonder, the niggard, Mattha Mac-a-Nirn, came on the scene crawlin' under a creel of quackin' ducks and geese.

It's a warm farmer's biggest barn 'twould take to hold the heaps and piles, the mixterum-gatherum collection of weddin' presents that were piled upon Jack and Mary that night. And Raftery for them thanked every man and woman with just a nod, and every soul knew they'd never have wealth enough to return him his change. At the weddin' supper—the greatest ever spread, 'twas agreed, in that part of the country—the people almost feared to munch a mouthful, lest they'd miss a word of Raftery's wit cracked by him from the head of the table—the wit that

THE LORE YOU LOVED

scored and scarred and sizzled, every word of it, but still even made him laugh on whose back it was risin' biggest blisters.

A proud man and woman were Jack and Mary, of the best and bravest and merriest, maddest weddin' supper the country ever witnessed! And 'tis well they might be proud—and, moreover, every children's child that was there would tell his children's children who it was that graced the head of Jack MacDermott's table his weddin' night. And when supper was done with, and the floor cleared, Raftery took his seat on a chair upon a table in the corner and, puttin' his fiddle under his chin, drew his bow upon it. And the people held their breaths, for sure the wailin' of the wind was in that fiddle, and the sighin' o' the sae and the whisperin' of the *Sidhe* among the sallies, and the heather-bleat's complainin' on the moor. The loveliness of the skies and the loneliness o' the bogs were there, and the whistlin' o' the black-bird and the singin' o' the lark and the marchin' o' the fairies on the moor, and the beat of their ten times ten thousand little feet at the moonlit dance upon the rath. Like the wind among the reeds, his music bent and turned what way it listed the breathless crowd that listened. And the lowest heart he lifted, and the hardest he melted like snow in May, and a soul there wasn't in all that

THE LORE YOU LOVED

gatherin' but, hearing, was put under fairy spells so sweet that they wished they might never be let free again.

And when it was due to lift the fiddler's fee, Raftery took his hat and went round the house himself, a thing no fiddler ever did before.

They who vowed, under the music's spell, to give sixpence, gave a shilling, and he that promised himself to give a shilling, gave a crown, till, when the house was finished, the hat was full and flowin' o'er.

And when every soul of them, still under their spells, had shook the hand of Jack and kissed the mouth of Mary, prayin' God to prosper their marriage, and pushed for their homes, Raftery, putting his fiddle under his old greeny-black coat, shook stunned Jack, and kissed Mary, and prayin' God to send them His blessin's, went his ways, leavin' both of them open-mouthed, wide-eyed and speechless.

The sight of the old man's hat upon the table, with silver runnin' o'er it, 'twas that fetched Mary back her speeches again in two minutes. "The creature's forgot his hat and his money!" cries she.

"Wait, wait, till I call him!" says Jack, boundin' for the door. But ere he reached it, it

THE LORE YOU LOVED

opened and in stepped Pat the Pedlar, with his:
“God save all here!”

“Throw down your pack, Pat,” says Jack,
“and fetch back here quick the old man with the
fiddle that met you on the boreen.”

“Who the—do you mean?” says Pat.

“Raftery—no other,” says Jack. “The great
Raftery himself! He’s been playin’ at our wed-
din’ and forgot his hatful of silver. Run after
him.”

“Raftery,” repeats Pat. “Is it the ravin’ is
come over ye? Raftery I helped to turn the sod
on three weeks ago beyont in County Galway—the
dead vagabone!”

“And Raftery,” then says he to himself with
a sad headshake, while Jack and Mary, open-
mouthed, were struck speechless in the middle of
the floor—“Raftery, the miserable spendthrift,
who might have died a millionaire, went away with
just three ha’pence in his pocket, and not a whole
shirt to his back. Raftery! Pagh!”

’Twas a man Raftery was, as well as a fiddler,
and the first and best of both. And there never
stepped on shoe leather nor walked the world
a man with manlier notions in his mind. And
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THE LORE YOU LOVED

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Like the wind among the reeds, his music bent and turned what way it liked the crowds that always listened. And the lowest heart was lifted, and the proudest was brought down, and the hardest heart he could shape like clay. Though the richest in the land he might be, the tattered coat was the best he wore. For money he despised, and "Love, Love," his one great theme, was all he saw and all he cared for, all that filled the "world star-high" for him. Music, Beauty and Love, they were the wealth he should bring with him when he died. So, with three ha'pence in his pocket and half a shirt on his back, he died a millionaire, did Raftery.

THE PRIEST'S BOY

AS the Priest's Boy he was perhaps more familiarly known to you, and certainly more widely known to all the world. Under Father Tom and two less famous priests gone before him, Barney was Priest's Boy, as he was likewise under Father La'rence, and still so under Father Dan. Priests, in fact, might come and priests might go, but the Priest's Boy went on forever. As a *bouchal* of eighteen, he received the distinction, "becoming the Priest's Boy of all-work"; and now, a hale and hearty lad of sixty years and six, he was Priest's Boy still—and that to all but the complete eclipse of his own right name, which, to rescue it from oblivion, we may here state was Barney Meehan.

In courting days, when more thoughtless youths went rambling, Barney, an ambitious boy ever, attended Micky Rufus's night school for three whole winters, and, finding himself then possessed of a toothful or two of reading and writing, capable (without danger of dislocating his tongue) of copying a headline if it was written big enough, and able to read "aisy prent," cast about him his active left eye—a notably active eye that could

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leave the other in limbo and make a living for itself—and, with characteristic pluck, aspired to be Priest's Boy. And it wasn't six months later till he found himself clothed with the proud dignity he had so daringly coveted.

Yet, truth to tell, between Barney and his office honours were reciprocated; for, if the office conferred dignity on Barney (and it did), Barney carried new dignity to it, and, the manners of his time considered, almost lifted Priest's Boy into a profession, and its duties into an art. Ere Barney lifted the rod of power, the Priest's Boy ranked in the Parish next only to the Masther (who, of course, was next to the priest); but under Barney the Priest's Boy was never next man to the Masther; in general, perhaps, consenting to place himself under reverential constraint, the Priest's Boy was next to the priest; but many, many times the Priest was only next man to the Priest's Boy.

To the first few priests he served, indeed, Barney was boy in deed and name. But, *noblesse oblige*; under Father Tom, realizing his position as part of that great structure against which not even the gates of Hell shall prevail, he began to shoulder what he considered his due share of the parish cares. Over Father La'rence he first asserted parental authority, which naturally devel-

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oped into affectionate despotism, so that poor Father La'rence, a man of magnificent humility, eventually became the Priest's Boy's boy. Father Dan, of sterner mould, did not at first kiss the rod. This waywardness Barney tolerated, but none the less endeavoured to reform, feeling confident that it only required time and temper, and even he would yet know his place. And the event justified his theory—Barney in due time finding himself master of the situation and of Father Dan, so that he had no occasion to discontinue the use of a certain care-burdened first person plural, which in the era of Father Tom had come unto him, bearing with it, in the eyes of you all new laurels for Barney's brow.

In those days to know how to serve Mass was an indispensable accomplishment for all who aspired to the office of Priest's Boy. Barney, when first his ambitious eye was turned on the position, travelled five miles of bog every night to get inducted into the mysteries of reading Latin by that expert scholar and historian, old Jamie Briany Mor of Lis-na-mrog. And this accomplishment was by no means the least factor in elevating him to the altitude he attained in the eyes of the world. The easy nonchalance with which, after a ten months' course and a twelve months' practice, he could acquit himself at Mass-serving made an ad-

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miring congregation feel that Barney had been born into the world to fill this office. His Latin, it is true, might sometimes have puzzled a professor of the language, for, besides displaying a lofty disregard for the pedantic trivialities which garnish the syntax, Barney followed a quite original and highly euphonic pronunciation invented by the aforesaid Jamie Briany Mor. But then the style in which he rattled out the sentences, and made the language spin about him, as he ran the priest neck and neck, was something that compelled your awed admiration.

But he was a benevolent despot to you, so long as you deserved benevolence. But no longer. Some acts of yours could not be condoned even by Barney—as, for instance, to die yourself, or have one of your family or friends die, at an improper hour. And if you did make up your mind to die at an obstinate hour, you did so in fear and trembling for the view the Priest's Boy would take of your misconduct. And you had to choose the bravest, most reckless man in the townland to go for the Priest for you. And the task oftentimes daunted the most daring.

“What's that, Condj Molloy?” the Priest's Boy would thunder. “Is it for to go on a sick-call to the toplans of Eglis! At three o'clock of a mornin' would freeze the words in your throat!

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Your brother's wife's stepmother is at death's doore, is she? Och, the sorra die with ye, wan and all! (An' may the Lord forgive me for sayin' it!) But it was only the night afore last, an' it rainin' cats an' dogs, we had to go within' a hen's race o' the same contrairy townlan', an' give the last rites to oul' Pether Phad. From afore cock-screech this mornin'—or yestherday mornin', I should say, for it's nixt mornin' now—we were on the road; first to Camlaragan, where we had to say a Mass for Molshie Hude (God rest her soul!), who was undherboord* from the night afore. Then hot-foot to Cron-na-nyass, where we had called a Station on Barney Jamie Managhan. From there to Dhrimanairy to see afther the ap-pairance that they put out on it has been ha'ntin' Hughie Dinnion's barn since the Scotchman hung himself in it. An' from that, without givin' us time to say 'The Lord bliss ye' or 'The divil miss ye,' off we were dhragged to the shouldher of Croaghan-Airgid till we'd anoint another crature (God guide her on her cowl journey this night!), who was laivin' farewell with hardships an' poverty. Hard'-arned, Condy Molloy, was the half-wink o' sleep we were tryin' to stale, when here slam bang came yourself with a tindherary at the doores an' windies as would make the dead curse

*A figurative equivalent for dead.

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in their coffins, wantin' us off to the toplan's of Eglish to see your brother's wife's stepmother! The sorra die with ye wanst an' forever, Condyl Molloy, say I again—an' may Heaven forgive both you an' me!—me for bad prayers and you for provokin' them! But sure, ever an' always Eglish was notorious for contrairiness; ye wouldn't die like common Christians, at a raisonable an' saisonable hour! Oh, no! if the day was seven months long, an Eglish woman 'ud wait till she'd get the middle o' the night, an' she was sure the Priest's Boy—an' the priest—was asleep, to take it intil her head to die. The back o' me hand to you Eglish! An' the sole o' me foot, too! Come, Father Dan! Father Dan! FA-ATHER DA-AN! Shake yourself and throw on your duds! Eglish no less! Glory be to goodness! Three o'clock in the mornin' an' fit to freeze a mill-race! The curse o' the crows on you, Condyl Molloy, but ye've a dale to answer for!"

Ere he returned the bravest quailed. Nor did Father Dan's most wrathful remonstrances avail to reform Barney. "Arrah, musha, and Heaven sees, Father Dan, ye have as much gumption as them. Small wondher they'd act on ye"—which is to say, die at night—"when this is the way ye take to encourage them! Be aisy with them! Be aisy with them! It's small consarn it

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gives your reverence in throth. But only ye have me to speak to them, be me sawnies, ye'd whistle another tune. An' the price o' ye it 'ud be, if I'd laive it atween you's. There's not an oul' woman from en' to win' of the parish—from Doorin Point to Lachty Ban—consarned with a corn on her wee toe but 'ud have post haste for ye at midnight, if she foun' the rain comin'. Ay, aisy with them, aisy with them, indeed! Ye ought to give out that ye'll toast chickens for them'll come latest an' want ye farthest. Me soul, I'd like to be dressin' some o' them down with a black-thorn plaster! I'll tell your reverence what it is—for it's as well to speak plain—either I'm the Priest's Boy, or I'm not. If I'm not, say so. If I am, then be the laive o' your Reverence's coat, ye'll please allow me to know me own business."

Mentally, Father Dan put his own interpretation on the meaning of the word Boy there; but, on reflection, he kept the lore to himself, and shaking his head retired—defeated. Deep down in his heart he had come to realize that he was indeed the Priest's Boy's boy.

WHEN GREEK MEETS GREEK

IN the course of time Father Dan, by long years' pinching of himself and by Herculean efforts, raised a new chapel, rude but accommodating, in the upper end of the parish, thus saving hundreds of you a seven miles' trudge on Sundays.

But with the Chapel came a new curate—and trouble.

When Father Luke had been presented to the Priest's Boy, and questioned and quietly studied, a blind man could see that his qualifications were, at least, questionable. Father Luke had three large defects that the Priest's Boy, however well disposed he might be, could not overlook. He was young, genteel, and of a new school. Barney gravely shook his head, and confided to Father Dan that the Bishop had made a mistake. Father Luke might make a very good curate, indeed, for townspeople, but he would never rise to the requirements of Knocknagar.

Still, if his superior, the Bishop, had ordered Barney to put his foot in the fire, it was his duty to do so—and he'd have done it. So with like heroism in this painful case here, he saw his duty and would do it. He would tolerate this reverend

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young gentleman, and unmurmuringly submit to be Priest's Boy over him.

However, when the new curate began turning the parish upside down and the Chapel inside out, the Priest's Boy's heroic resolve was put to the pin of its collar. But when Father Luke announced his intention of training a band of young Mass-servers—"acolytes!" he styled them—rebellion was let loose. Father Dan, fearfully recognizing the crisis in the Church, hurried from Barney to Father Luke, and reasoned and remonstrated. But he found his curate as obstinate as his Boy. "He must have his way, I suppose, Barney," Father Dan resignedly confided to the Priest's Boy later. "The dicken's grandfather wouldn't move him."

Barney's wrath was red. "So sure," he vowed, "as he fetches his pressgang of acrobats on that altar, so surely will I either march off it or brake their necks for them afore they go on."

Father Dan admitted that, certainly, it was an innovation. "But, new kings, new laws, Barney. I suppose you and I have fallen out of the race. The world has gone on and left us behind. Father Luke assures me he's only doing things as they're done everywhere now."

"An' upon my word, Father Dan, it'll not surprise me—an' I don't know if I'll not feel that it's

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your desarvin'—if this *new jintleman* would, the very next move, ax the Bishop to have the both of us suspended, bekase you haven't got the latest way of savin' sowls, nor me the newest improvements in Priests' Boys!"

If it was to save his life, poor harassed Father Dan could not hold in the hearty burst of laughter that seized and shook him. But Barney turned short and marched off in disgust.

The new curate selected half a score of the brightest parish youths, and in the chapel sacristy, in the evenings, inducted them into the mysteries of Mass-serving. And whenever Barney, on lawful business bent, came into the sacristy on such occasions, the students eternally got in his way—with undesirable results for them. The Priest's Boy discovered that the most convenient way of handling acolytes was by the neck, and no words wasted. And after a few weeks' practice he acquitted himself with admirable deftness in the new business.

The Priest's Boy, too well realizing the respect he owed the Church, dutifully refrained from handling a curate as he would an acolyte. Dignifiedly, he maintained towards Father Luke an attitude of armed neutrality. At Mass, instinct with proper religious feeling, he shut his mind to the individual and served Father Luke with the like

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precision, deftness, and dazzling nonchalance he would Father Dan. Great, then, was his pained amazement when, one day that he thought he had acquitted himself with even more brilliancy than usual (if that were possible), Father Luke presumed to point out to him how he might improve his methods! He, who had served Mass for priests and Bishops—ay, and a Primate!—when Father Luke MacMinamin was little known and less worth! He, who, during five and forty years' daily serving of Mass, had never once before had priest or dignitary need to say: "Barney, you did it ill," till his path was crossed by this young gentleman to whom the College cobwebs were still clinging.

The Priest's Boy, too dumbfounded for utterance to speak, listened mechanically: "Go gracefully, gently, quietly on the altar. Don't stagger up and down it as if you were coming from a fair."

Barney gasped. "What'll it be next, I dunno?" he thought to himself.

Now, if there was one point in the serving of Mass, upon his style in which the Priest's Boy particularly prided himself, it was the ringing of the altar-bell. For Barney, after patient practice, had acquired the art of making the bell a pleasure to hear. He began the ringing in a quick, sharp, business-like tone, which gradually dropped lower and lower, then suddenly and startingly leapt

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higher and higher, and as quickly again fell down, down, down, dying away in a softly dreamful, far-off cadence, till more startlingly than ever it suddenly shot up loud, short, and sharp—and abruptly stopped. Barney was well aware that he had reduced bell-ringing to an art; and the thought now crossed his mind: "I wonder when he's tired tellin' me my faults, will he at laist have the good breedin' to compliment me on my ringin' o' the bell?"

"Then," the new curate went on, "when it is necessary to ring *that bell*, I want you to do away with the eternal and nonsensical clattering you carry on, give the bell two or three little tips, and have done with it." Barney was so surely paralyzed that the *coup de grace* was cruelly superfluous: "One would think you were ringing for an auction!"

After Barney's spirit had been thus insidiously sapped, the task of getting his acolytes actually on the altar was made easier for Father Luke. Yet he proceeded with caution. At first they just kept their places there, and joined in the responses, leaving the active duties to Barney. The Priest's Boy, though he never tried to hide his contempt for his unbidden helpers, still did nothing more aggressive than merely stepping on their toes when passing opportunity invited. But when, after a few weeks, one of them (so inspired by Father

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Luke, who thus insinuated the wedge) attempted to ring the bell, Barney drew him such a whole-hearted slap on the ear as awakened from his sleep in a remote corner of the chapel Parra Beag, who had been sitting up for two nights with a sick cow, and caused the presumptuous fellow to drop the bell with a clang, whereupon Barney, seizing it, bravely rang it out to his old tune, fixing the squirming aggressor with his most fearful look, while he did so.

Father Luke, feeling sorely the ignominy that had been put upon him and his servitor, sought Father Dan that very evening, and spent a solid two hours closeted with his parish priest. Then Barney was sent for, and after a further two hours, a treaty was concluded whereby the Priest's Boy was to suffer Father Luke to bring upon the altar what creatures he liked—even the *Bacach Ruadh* if he wished, Barney declared—and train them to be a parish laughing-stock, if he liked. Barney was not to be asked to aggravate himself by lending them the colour of his company. But, on the other hand, he and he alone was, as heretofore, to serve Mass for Father Dan—and continue to dazzle the parish.

And the Priest's Boy, prophesying ills unspeakable, washed his hands of all responsibility henceforward for the new curate and his "clan-jaffrey of acrobats."

BUT WHEN GREEK MEETS TARTAR

BUT a thorn in the postmistress's side was the Priest's Boy. Partly because of his exalted office, but chiefly, perhaps, because it was born in him, Barney was a domineering fellow who could tolerate no tryanny except his own. He was the one reckless hero in the parish who dared, in broad daylight, and with the full knowledge that an incensed postmistress's eye was on him, walk forward to Nancy Kelly's window with exasperating self-possession, and coolly drop his letters one by one into the slot, calling through the hole after them: "There's two o' them letters for Belfast, an' wan for Letterkenny, an' wan for Amerikay—see that ye send them off quickly, Nancy, if ye please."

Plain human flesh and blood was never meant to stand that.

Ere relations had become too strained between the postmistress and the Priest's Boy, Nancy had occasionally condescended to question Barney anent Father Dan's correspondence. "Barney, that letter I give ye for his Riverence the other day was from furrin' parts, an' still it wasn't an Amerikay stamp was on it?" "That letter,"

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Barney gravely replied, "was from the Imp'ror of the Yalla Say, wantin' to know how ducks was sellin' here be the pair in Donegal, bekase that he was goin' to send his youngest son to Timbuctoo to dail in that commodity." This uncalled-for insolence on Barney's part put Nancy on her dignity for months. But at length the arrival of a letter with the Rome postmark so far excited Nancy's curiosity that she deigned to stoop again to the fellow. "That," Barney coolly informed her, "was a letter from no less nor our Holy Father himself, the Pope (may Heaven bliss him, an' prosper his pratie-garden!), informin' Father Dan that the En' o' the Worl' starts Chewsday come eight days in the County Wicklow, an' may be expected to work round here within three weeks at the farthest."

Nancy Kelly never after demeaned herself by questioning the low fellow on such subjects; and, for Barney's sake, you hope that he realized his punishment as keenly as he should.

Often, this anarchist (sure he was little better!) had the impudence to walk in on the heels of Jimmy the Post, and stand by till he got his share of the mails. And if, by awkward mismanagement, Nancy permitted him a glimpse of the directions on other letters, he made it his business to send word to the fortunate parties that there

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was a letter lyin' at Nancy's for them, and so send them trooping down on the postmistress before she had had time to examine their letters with the leisure necessary to proper enjoyment of the work.

He lost no opportunity, too, of aggravating Nancy. When, once, she handed him no less than four letters for Father Dan, all at one time, Barney, repressing all outward signs of excitement, remarked that he thought "this day might houl' up, an' be a gran' hay day, if the wind didn't work back at twelve," slipping the letters into the pocket of his long blue coat with the dazzling carelessness of a personage inured to the receipt of extraordinary mails.

For Barney, who was used to dominate, couldn't bring his neck to bend beneath any woman's rod; but, on the contrary, considered that Nancy Kelly, instead of expecting, should be giving him and his office homage. Nancy's irreverent, but very expressive, comment on this was just "Tir-oodlum!" accompanied by an aggravating finger-snap. And then the war was on.

But, though Nancy had the advantage in good staying powers, Barney's dignified reserve was too aggravating for any woman to stand. And it looked as if poor Nancy must let go her temper and lose the day. But good luck came to her aid. There was a son of Johnnie Brodbin's, who went

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to the States; and, having a taste for dabbling in water-colours, used to decorate the envelopes of his letters to Father Dan with a mani-coloured eagle, bearing in its beak a scroll (also elaborately variegated), on which the address was penned. Altogether, this decorative envelope was a dazzling work of art to all of you, and set the parish marvelling at the genius of Johnnie's son, God bless him! But, very often, Barney was sorely puzzled to know why the envelope, when handed to him, was disfigured with dirt—a problem which remained unsolved till one day, walking unexpectedly into Nancy's, he found her youngest squat upon the floor, amusing itself with a recently arrived work of Manis Brodbin's art, which served the purpose of keeping the baby out of mischief whilst Nancy went to the well!

Barney forgot the Priest's Boy's dignity that day! Nancy retailed to the neighbours how ferociously he had snatched the letter out of the innocent creature's hand, and glared at the helpless infant as if he would like to wither it up on the spot; and how, towards herself, he behaved like "an onnatural, oncultivated bear."

Barney, when he regained control of himself, returned to threaten the postmistress with all the terrors of the Church of which, as Priest's Boy, he was a humble representative, and vowed to

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bring down upon her head the vengeance of Father Dan. But to Barney's dumbfounding, Nancy again snapped her fingers at him—snapped her fingers!—and said: "*That* for both you an' Father Dan!"

Little was the grass that grew under Barney's heels then, till he was at home and imparting to Father Dan the startling intelligence. When Barney had unburdened himself, Father Dan helped himself generously from his snuff-box, offered it to Barney, as he said: "Barney, me boy, I'm afraid Nancy Kelly's past prayin' for." "But," Barney remonstrated, waving the snuff-box away, "aren't ye goin' for to punish her as she desarves?" "Indeed, and I am that, Barney. Do take a snuff, man; it'll do ye good. I mean to leave that woman to the torments of her own conscience."

As Barney whisked himself out of Father Dan's presence, he cried: "If every varago in the parish takes to snappin' their fingers at both of us, it'll be your desarts!"

He next threatened to invoke upon Nancy's doomed head the powers of the Postmaster General. But Nancy brazenly laughed this threat to scorn: Barney didn't know that gentleman's address; and, besides, even if he did—if Barney Meehan had the impidence to dhrop into *her* post-

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office a letter containing barefaced insinuations about herself—she would light the fire with said letter! And then she “would just like to see him dare to darken her doore with his forbidden countenance, after!”

So Barney was checkmated there. He then tried to stir up sedition against Nancy, and talked treason all round. Finally, when he thought he had the country ripe for it, he went to Ned Carra-bin’s wake of Glen Coagh to raise the standard of rebellion. With the exception of half a dozen of those old wiseacres, let-well-enough-alone creatures, who exist in every parish, Barney here found he had the country with him. Accordingly it was agreed that six selected men, with Barney Meehan as spokesman, should wait upon Nancy, at her post-office after Mass on the following Sunday, and respectfully but firmly state their grievances, and demand redress. In case of the non-success of the embassy, or in case that—as many were pessimistic enough to conjecture—the ambassadors were repelled with assault, insult and contumely, it was not exactly clear what the subsequent procedure would be; but the people were given the distinct impression that something awful would follow; possibly even (it was hinted) Jimminy the Tailor, who constituted himself Barney’s lieutenant on the occasion, would himself order in a large

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and varied assortment of postage stamps, and deprive Nancy Kelly of every vestige of her trade. Barney was elated; he had not dreamt there was so much genuine and admirable spirit in the parish; and he gave Jimminy and his fellow-conspirators to understand that they were the stuff heroes were made of.

Poor Barney had not allowed for the pot-valour which, he should have known, always is at social gatherings. Next morning, the heroes were tripping over each other to find who would be first to gain immunity by disclosing the design to Nancy. Jimminy, who, Barney thought, should have flourished in the days of chivalry, and borne a lance in brave but hopeless causes, was first though, And, as Barney himself, in the timid mood that will possess the greatest and most daring of men on the verge of a great crisis, called on Nancy that day for his letters, his breath was taken away when Nancy, looking him full in the eye, said, with that awful calm that precedes a tornado: "Barney Meehan, I'm toul' ye were at Ned Carrabin's wake o' Glen Coagh last night?" Barney could only gasp. Nancy waited long enough to let her dire meaning sink into his soul. Then she said: "Barney Meehan, ye're a swindlin' imposthure, an' an intherfarin' vagabone!" And she followed him

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with her terrible eye, as he, dumbfounded, slunk out of the door.

On the Sunday after, the Priest's Boy, having found his nerve again, descended upon the boys, when they had gathered before Mass, outside the Chapel gate. He turned upon them the bitter vials of his wrath, and denounced them as "crawlers," rolling the word with sweet relish on his tongue. "You's is cr-r-rawlers," he said, "cr-r-r-rawlers, and you's 'll never be anything but cr-r-r-rawlers! An' you, Jimminy" (the pinch-faced Jimminy winced), "you're the pr-r-rince of cr-r-rawlers!"

But storm at these people as he might, and cow them as he might and did, he had to confess to himself in the anguish of his heart that he feared—*feared* to meet Nancy Kelly's terrible eye, and return her defiant glance again.

For Barney's spirit was broken. Temporarily, of course, that is.

YOUR POSTMISTRESS

IN having a lady like Nancy Kelly so suited for filling the office of Postmistress at Knockagar, you and yours were signally blessed.

Of course, in formal compliance with the Regulations, Nancy had a slot in the window, ostensibly for the purpose of posting your letters. But hardly any of you had the hardihood—the bare-faced impudence, Nancy styled it—to make use of a convenience, which manifestly implied distrust of the inmate. Under cover of night, or taking mean advantage of Nancy's temporary absence (perhaps she had run over to Jamie Mor's to ask the time on the clock, or down to Toal a-Gallagher's to learn the designs of Neil Mulrinny, who went up the road like a whirlwind an hour ago, without tellin' man or mortal where he was going), unprincipled people among you *had* dropped letters into the slot in the window. But these people invariably lived to regret the insult offered to an unoffending woman. Nancy held over such a letter, till, by linking bits and scraps of circumstantial evidence and calling in experts upon handwriting, she ran the rascal to earth, and compelled confession and abject apology—when,

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however, both were too late to mitigate her scathing denunciation.

“There’s a doore to me house, built big enough to let in both the letter an’ the letter-carrier; an’ if I’m good enough to send off their letters to the other en’ o’ the worl’ an’ further, I’m surely fit for to have them handed into me hand.” Thus Nancy expounded the ethics of letter-posting. “There’s no plague to me house. An’ I’m sartint there’s none can cast up to me that I ever queskened them what was on the insides of their letters.” This last statement was strictly true. Nancy never did ask anyone of you concerning the contents of your letter—yet, strange to say, there were few of you brave enough to hand Nancy Kelly a letter, and meet her eye unflinchingly, and then turn and walk out without volunteering information which Nancy would “sooner put her fut in the fire than ax.”

When you, who knew your business, went in to Nancy’s post-office with a letter, you first swapped salutations with Nancy, and then accepted the proffered chair, and gave and got the news of your respective parts of the parish before remarking that you were thinking of posting a letter. If Nancy then nodded approbation—as almost always she graciously did—you produced your letter, in the leisurely manner becoming a gentleman,

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turning it round and over, informed her that it was to be sent to Ioway in the States, to Dubuque, to young Jimmy. Nancy, by repeated nods of the head, signified that she noted all this, and would remember it. You then handed it to her, inquiring how much the damage would be to bring it to Ioway. And you went on to enlighten Nancy upon Jimmy's affairs—in particular how he stood financially—and informed her of the subject-matter of the present epistle.

You made sure to thank her and express your sense of gratitude for the obligation she put you under, before taking your leave.

There was not any use trying to equivocate concerning the contents of a letter, for Nancy could read any man "like a ha'penny book," as she said herself, though he were as deep as a tailor's thimble.

Jimmy the Post brought out the mails (often a whole dozen, and sometimes as many as sixteen and even eighteen letters) to Nancy's post-office from Donegal, once a week. None of you, of course, had the impertinence to go looking for a letter on arrival day; and, indeed, if you did, your journey would be deservedly fruitless.

The right of one day's grace wherein Nancy might scrutinize the superscription and post-marks, and speculate upon the probable contents

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of letters, was a prerogative which not even the most punctilious of you would dream of denying your postmistress. You well remember, though, how Charlie the Nudger one time, looking for his letter, walked in on the heels of Jimmy the Post. And how Nancy withered him up with one look, and dismissed him with the query: "A letter? Musha, who the dickens do ye think would send the likes o' you a letter?" And by way of admonition to Charlie, and to all the precipitate in the district, she very properly (as you think) delivered him his letter fourteen days after its arrival. It contained his passage money to the States. And Charlie thanked Heaven from the bottom of his heart that he was soon to be beyond Nancy Kelly's jurisdiction.

When Nancy did gracefully bestow a letter on an enquirer, common politeness, of course—not to mention Nancy's eye—required that the letter should there and then be opened, and its contents discussed. Pathrick Martin of the Mullens, though, was an unprincipled man, and when he got the letter one time from Annie, from Cincinnati (which, as he anticipated, contained confidences about Annie's trials with her Dutch husband, who drank), he slipped the missive into his pocket with an assumption of unconsciousness that would, in an honourable cause, have done him

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credit; and then made a bold attempt to retire under cover of an irregular fire of remarks upon indifferent subjects. And as, despite Nancy's dry, monosyllabic replies, he still continued to edge towards the door, she finally brought her cold gray eye to bear upon him, with such deadly precision, that Pathrick in another moment, alive to the extent of his meanness, dropped into a provincial chair, remembered the letter with suspicious suddenness, drew it out, and implored Nancy to do him the particular favour of reading it for him.

And the case of poor Dan Mac a-Nirn, 'tis well you recall. Dan made a sweetheart for himself when he was hired up the Pettigo way. As she was both wise and well-to-do, Dan, when he returned home, resolved to correspond with her with matrimonial intentions. Under protest, Nancy Kelly despatched two of poor Dan's love missives, and delivered to him two replies. But she put down her foot when Dan came along with a third—an epistle upon which he had had Jimminy the Tailor working for three nights, and which had been by the proud author pronounced “a triumph of jaynius.” She got Dan seated in the corner, and stood over him with arms akimbo. And, “I'll tell ye what it is, Dan Mac-a-Nirn,” she said, “ye're only makin' a play-sham of both me and me post-office. I'll neither

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take nor give any more blatherskiten' letters. If every other fool in the parish begun takin' afther you, every time they're in a coortin' way, my six poun' a year would be hard-arned money. Go away about your business now, Dan Mac-a-Nirn, go home with ye; and post that letther that's in your fist behind the fire. An' if ye want a wife (though, in troth, when ye have your oul' mother an' your two sisthers and your aunt and your grandmother to look afther, ye're marri'd enough)—but if ye *must* have a wife, look about ye in your own neighbourhood, an' ye'll get wan be waggin' your finger. There's Hughie Shan's daughter Marg'et—why don't ye take her? Or Shusie Doherty of the Roadside—why don't ye marry Shusie? Away with ye now; an' take a good advice when it's given ye for nothin'!" Dan, poor fellow, sighed, and went home, and married Hughie Shan's daughter, Marg'et. And a poor girl above at Pettigo probably for long and long walked away heartless from her post-office, and doesn't know to this day that 'twas the tyranny of Nancy Kelly, and not the fickleness of Dan, that left her pining.

Of course, to open and read all newspapers without the necessity of the addressee's presence was a prerogative assumed by Nancy naturally. Likewise the privilege of giving the perusal of them to

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favoured neighbours, before it was sent to yourself, for whom the sender designed it.

Michael Meehan when he went to the Far West used to send home *The Rocky Mountain Lightning Streak* to his father Teddy with a regularity that was particularly gratifying to the postmistress. She did not usually detain *The Lightning Streak* more than three or four days on its way. But, on one week it contained an uncompleted article upon that great Irish-American General, Thomas Francis Meagher, which so whetted Teddy Meehan's appetite for the remainder that he brushed his coat and put on a clean collar, and took his stick in his fist and travelled three times in the following fortnight all the way from his home in Tullyfinn into Nancy's post-office in Knockagar to enquire for the subsequent issue. On the third occasion, though Teddy observed with the corner of his eagle eye that Nancy's whole soul was engrossed in an article in no other than *The Lightning Streak*, she hurriedly replied to him that it hadn't come, and buried herself in the paper again. Teddy, poor man, sat him down for a while, torn by inward conflict. His anxiety for the paper, however, got the better of his discretion, and, desperately nerving himself, he said: "But, Nancy, *a chara*, isn't that *The Lightnin' Streak* that ye're readin'?" Nancy, lowering the

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paper, looked at Teddy for a full minute with an outraged look. "Teddy Meehan," she then said, "let me tell ye—what ye don't seem for to know—that it's the height of ill-breedin' to look over any wan's shouldher when they're readin'!"

And as Teddy, all abashed, gathered himself away, she added, by way of parting salute:

"Small wondher that ye're ashamed o' yourself." She watched after him scornfully till he had slunk round the bend of the road; and then, with a pained and injured look on her countenance, resumed perusal of *The Lightning Streak*.

THE BACHELORS OF BRAGGY

NOT a long way from your heathery, happy Knockagar lay the fruitful valley of Braggy, where toiled like slaves the thrifty descendants of those Scotch for whose benefiting your ancestors were, long ago, driven to the moors. But if you supplied them with fat lands once, they have supplied you and yours with no stint of funny incident, anecdote and character ever since—making windy hearths warm and cold nights comfortable.

In your own day, for example, they gave you for your delectation the Bachelors of Braggy—the brothers Peter, Paul and Richard Lowry.

While their old mother lived, of course, the idea of bringing any other woman into the house was as far from them as the far-lands of Brenter. For they had all the plenitude of niggardliness and lack of poetry that their Scotch ancestors brought over (their only belongings) to Ireland.

When the neighbours, on a rare occasion, caught the Bachelors of Braggy at a wake or festivity in Knockagar, they, in waggish mood, would match-make for them.

“Arrah, Pether Lowry, isn’t it the shame for

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yourself, and for Paul, and for Richard, there beside ye, that wan of you's hasn't yet put the word to a woman!"

Peter and Paul and Richard would all *hissle* in their chairs for the uncomfortableness of the topic. But all eyes in the wake-house were now on them quizzically, so Peter would answer snarlingly:

"What the divil do we want with a woman?"

"Ay?" from Paul and "Ay?" from Richard.

"Well, ye know, it's a wee waikness some men has—to be fond of the girls."

"Well, we aren't fond o' them, and wouldn't give a barleycorn there wasn't a girl atween here and Halyfax."

"Yis!" "Yis!" from Richard and Paul.

"But ye know yourself, Pether, and can't deny, a woman's an oncommon handy thing about a house?"

"Handy? Ah! as a conthrairy pig (not mainin' any comparishon) that'll go every way but the way ye want. Besides, haven't we our oul' mother?"

"Right, Pether!" "Right, Pether!" from the other brothers.

"Still and all, a mother, ye know, isn't everything to a man?"

"If a man depends on anyone else nor himself

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to be the remainder, he'll depend on a rotten rush. And a wife and a mother in the wan house 'ud be as pleasant company as spittin' cats."

"But the wife 'ill be with a man, Pether, when the mother's gone."

"Then God help the man!"

"God help him!" from Paul, and "God help him!" from Richard.

"Now, there's Marg'et McClane above in Altidoo, and she'd jump at the offer of any wan of the three of you's."

"It's thankful we are to both yourself and Marg'et; but, as ye seem to have an inth'rest in her, better not let her jump for feerd she might miss."

"For feerd she might miss—yis!" choired Richard and Paul.

"A fine, stout, sthrappin' girl, on the aisy side of fifty-five; and a fine hand at beetlin' praties and carin' calves."

But poor Peter's temper would, despite desperate efforts, give out:

"Och, to the divil with Marg'et McClane and her calves! *We* don't want her! We don't want no woman! And if we did want wan, we wouldn't ax *you* to make her for us!"

"Right ye are, Pether!" "Right ye are!" say the brothers.

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As predicted, it came to pass that the mother died. Then, Richard, as he was the youngest, was voted into the mother's place, and had to milk, wash, cook and make the butter. After a time, however, he discovered that they were not far astray who had suggested that a woman was a mortal handy convenience around a house, and he dumbfounded his brothers by announcing his discovery—under his breath—one night.

So persistent, however, became Richard in pushing his propaganda that Peter and Paul, after many secret consultations, consented that, even at the cost of their peace of mind, Richard must be humoured.

So they said to Richard: "It's a poor thing that we must fetch in any man's daughter to support her."

"No man's daughter comes in here," Richard said, "unless she fetches her support with her."

"Humm! Then fire away, Richard; since ye must have your way. Where are ye goin' to rise your woman?"

"My woman? Faith it's not me's goin' to take her, but wan o' yourselves. I don't want her."

"Faith and I'm very sure it's not me that 'ill take her," said Peter.

"And I'll give me davy it isn't me," quoth Paul. So Richard made the whistling sound of a man

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who has found a *cul de sac* where he was certain of a free passage.

"And what then?" said Richard.

"Richard *a stoir*, it's often ye heerd our poor mother (God rest her!) say: 'Let him calls for the tune pay the piper!' "

"I'm young and green, boys" (Richard would be forty-seven by Hallowmass night), "and I'm no ways suited to manage a woman," he said pleadingly.

"Well, there ye are." For neither Peter nor Paul was anxious to help them out of a dilemma into which stubbornness had led him:

"But, boys——"

"'As ye made your bed, ye must lie on it,' " said they, quoting again from their mother's store of saws.

There was nothing left to Richard but to accept the inevitable; and he reluctantly resolved to bear it, for the benefit of the house, with what grace he could.

As the next step was to find a suitable woman for Richard, the brothers agreed to take counsel with the *Bacach* Gasta* (the swift-footed beggarman.) So the next time the *Bacach Gasta* came that way and dropped his wallets in Lowrys' for his usual night's sojourn, he was taken into confi-

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dence after supper, and asked to procure a good wife for Richard. And the requirements were catalogued for him.

"The notion o' marryin' is sthrong on Richard," Paul informed the *Bacach*.

He looked Richard up and down, then said:

"Well, that's neither shame nor blame. He's come to the time o' day."

"In troth it's wan of ourselves he wanted to take the woman."

"Which wasn't wan bit fair," said the beggarman. "The young heart always for the hard road."

"In your travels do ye think ye could pick up a suitable wife for us?"

"I haven't a doubt of it."

"Ye know just the kind of wife we want?"

"I have a brave guess."

"A fine, sthrong, sthrappin', agricultural woman," said Peter.

"Ay."

"No frills or foldherols," said Paul.

"No figgery-foys whatsomiver," said Peter.

"She must be 'holsome' (wholesome)," said Richard.

"And as hardy as a harrow-pin," said Peter.

"No objection if her countenance is well-favoured," said Richard.

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"*Bacach*," said Peter with indignant warmth, "she may be as ill-lookin' as the devil's gran'mother."

"Don't send any chiny doll here," said Paul.

Said Richard: "I mean, for ins'ance, *Bacach*, if ye are in swithers about two weemen, both equally good in every other way, but wan of them havin' the advantage of the other in looks——"

"Then," said Peter, "sen' us the ugliest o' the two, by all manner o' mains."

"The uglier the woman, the better the house-keeper," Paul added.

"And the more savin', and the less she'll throw out upon fine clothes," quoth Peter.

"If she's shapely," hazarded Richard to the envoy, "don't hold that again' her."

"Shapely," snapped Peter. "Ay, let her be shapely as the milk churn—a dependable pattern."

"None o' these ornaments for us," said Paul, "that laive ye tremblin' lest they'd break in the middle."

"The woman ye pick must have money—a good penny of it," said Peter.

"Or lan'," said Paul. "Of course," said Peter.

"'Tis good worldly wisdom," said the *Bacach*, with an arch look that was lost on the boys, "to marry the money, and bid the wife to the weddin'."

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"She must be come to years of discretion," said Paul.

"And have the most of a couple of score years of work in her still," said Peter.

"She must be able and willin' to work," said Paul.

"To work like a nigger," said Peter.

"If she's a bit youngish, she'll be the companionabler," said Richard.

"A bit ouldish, *Bacach*, and she'll be the sensibler," said Peter tartly.

The *Bacach Gasta* was nodding assent to all.

"She must be as wise as a fox."

"And as close as a male-chist."

"She must understand all about bringin' up young calves and pigs," said Peter.

"And about doctorin' sick cattle," said Paul.

"She can't be too sthrong," Paul added.

"Sthrong enough to toss a bull," said Peter.

"And kindly," interpolated poor Richard.

"Kindly! Pagh!" said Paul.

"Sevair enough to sour crame, if ye like," said Peter.

"Now do ye know what we want?" said Paul.

"Yis, to the nail on her little finger," said the *Bacach Gasta*, passing the pipe to Peter.

"Well, keep your eyes open then," said Peter, "when ye're up in the Dhrimholm parish. Out

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of there comes the best scantlin' of weemen I know."

"They're companionabler down the shore side o' the parish," said Richard.

"They're hardier back the mountain way," said Paul.

"The worst woman in Dhrimholm is worth her mait," said the *Bacach*. "This is Chewsday. I'll be up here again Sathurday. I have a likely couple or three in me eye, and I'll see if I can't fix you's up in wan."

The *Bacach Gasta* picked out for them, in Dhrimholm, three women, one after the other; but the first of these was rejected as unsuitable, because, when they went to see her and she set about making tea for them, she cast out the old tea-leaves, which, as they observed, "would have taken a lovely grip o' the second water." So, after an adjournment to the end of the house, for consultation, poor Richard was unwillingly delegated to carry in to her the verdict that, while they considered her an uncommon good woman, they regretted she would not suit them. And they passed on to the next.

This second was rejected because Paul, having taken a stolen glimpse into a band-box in her house, saw that she owned a hat with feathers—which

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signified that "she'd let consait fly away with her cash."

The third woman, however, Sarah Bell Baskin, ingratiated herself with them; for she carried pots, and fed pigs and cows, and carded wool, and brought in a creel of turf whilst they interviewed her in snatches. And she baked bread at one end of the table, chatting them, whilst they drank tea at the other. So, upon a short consultation, Sarah Bell, with her hundred-pound fortune, was accepted.

Of course, Richard had objected that she did not look as "quate" (quiet) as should the ideal he sought. But Peter and Paul frowned him down. "She'll be quate enough, in throth, after we've taken twelve months' work out of her," Paul assured him.

"We've consented to have a wife to humour ye, and taken the divil's own throuble to pick her for ye. If ye don't take Sarah Bell Baskin, the sarra a wife ever ye'll see, by our consent, if there was a hurrycane of them hailed again' the door."

"Oh, then, if she plaíses you's, she'll plaíse me," Richard sighed.

And so she should after all. For when the marriage license was procured by the three, and brought home by the three, Jemmy Managhan discovered that 'twas Peter's name was therein re-

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corded: for Peter, having acted as spokesman, his name was asked and given without thought, and entered.

"This is a nice how-d'-ye-do," said Peter.

"Well, we can't be goin' back another seven-mile journey, and then, as likely as not, pay for a new license," said Paul.

"Sure it's all the same," said the magnanimous Richard.

So Peter, heaving a sigh, resolved to abide by his own blunder. And Sarah Bell, for her part, did not mind. She was marrying into a good sittin' down.

Though on the wedding-day people said the Lowrys had never been known to go to church before, they themselves said that was untrue. For they had been to church on the day they were christened. And Paul, moreover, had gone into it one evening Sam Coulter, the sexton, had it open, in hope of raising sport with his rat-terrier.

As, while they were in the vestry consulting and getting instructed for the ordeal, it was found a crowd of the unregenerate ones of the parish had assembled outside with the certain intention of giving the Bachelors of Braggy a warm reception when they should emerge one Bachelor less, the Minister advised them that the ceremony be post-

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poned for peace sake. The Bachelors thought well of the wisdom of this.

But Sarah Bell was not in procrastinating mood. She knew the proverb about a bird in the hand. "I tell ye what it is, boys," said she, "either the marriage is to be now or niver. If it's to be *now*, it'll be *now*; and if it's to be niver, it'll be *niver*!" After launching the ultimatum, she paused for their decision.

"Then it'll be now," said the Bachelors.

And, by taking the near-cut across fields with his bride, the strategical Peter disappointed the rascals who, for a full hour after, were keeping a reception warm, outside the church gate.

Richard had not been altogether wrong when he said he did not consider Sarah Bell "quate" enough for him. He had proved this experimentally. Paul discovered it. Peter, alas, discovered it. It took three days to bring it home to them with force. Sarah Bell, herself, with the aid of a three-legged stool, supplied the necessary force. In a week the peace of the Lowry household was irretrievably wrecked—also most of the crockery-ware, and the more portable articles of furniture likewise, and Richard's right arm, some of Paul's teeth, and poor Peter's head.

In three weeks Sarah Bell Baskin, leaving them her left-handed blessing, took her hundred pounds

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and her departure, and returned to the house of her father.

On the night after she left, the three brothers sat around the fire, smoking in turn. And, after a long silence, Peter spoke, looking severely at Richard, who cowered. Peter said:

“Now, that chapture’s over and done with (from the depth o’ me soul, God be thankit!), and let us hope—*let us hope*—we’ll niver again hear another such shame.”

“Niver!” said Paul emphatically. “Niver, we hope!” and he gazed at Richard with a sidelong look of scathing rebuke.

Poor Richard looked into the fire and sighed.

THE MASTHER

THE first time that you ambitioned being a schoolmaster was when, on a Sunday morning before Mass, taking your ease with the crowds on the green sward of the chapel yard, you saw Masther Maguire chatting Father Dan up and down the yard—and not the least bit nervous. 'Twas then was brought home to you with thunderbolt suddenness the great man a schoolmaster must be entirely. And as suddenly you resolved: “ 'Tis a Masther I'll be.”

You were six, rising seven, then. When you were thirteen, you smiled resignedly at the temerity of youth. Maturity of judgment and knowledge of the world had now taught you that the schoolmaster, climax of all human ambition—barring the priest, of course, which was a touch above the climax—was far as the apples of Eden beyond the reach of common mortals like yourself, who, although usually holding head of the class, were but a herder of sheep, digger of potatoes and shearer of corn.

But as you shored your corn or herded your sheep on the hills of Donegal on wonderful mornings when you watched the great, red sun roll over the

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shoulder of Cruach Gorm, your mind was constantly reverting to that wild dream of the irresponsible youth of six, rising seven. Excusing him on account of his youth, you, all the same, found his dream rather a seductive one to play with. And a young man of thirteen, shearing the yellow corn when the sunrise is flooding the valley, or sitting on a spink of rock at the same stimulating hour and listening to the liquid harmony that is pouring from the lark's breast high in the sky, and excitedly looking afar over a magic world, must be pardoned if his fancy will take wild flights.

It was pleasing then to play at your being twenty and a schoolmaster—"The Masther"! The parish looking up to you with mingled awe and admiration, addressing you as Masther, seeking advice and information from you on all subjects under the sun—and over it—making you reader and writer of their letters, their wills, their agreements (free of charge), inviting you to face the priest at the station-house breakfast, to grace their feasts, to lead their fun, to add the necessary importance and adornment to all their functions, and (it was little wonder that you grabbed your spink of rock at this one) drawing the, oh! so dizzy salary of thirty pounds a year! Princes and emperors, go hide your little heads! It gave you

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renewed confidence, when, having taken days and weeks to screw your courage to it, you, sitting by the fireside on a night when the harvest was all in, sprang upon your father, who smoked in one chimney corner, and your mother, who spun in the other, the bomb: "I think I'll be a Masther like Masther Moroney beyont!" And neither of them fainted or stampeded with fright.

But your mother, releasing a hand from her work, stroked your red head affectionately and said: "God prosper the thought, *a cuisle mo chroidhe*." And your father, after continuing his steady gaze into the flames for some tense moments—they were tense to you—took his pipe from his mouth and said: "Well, *a mhic*, 'tis a bould thought, God bless it! But I do be thinkin' there's a grain o' brains knockin' about somewheres in the back o' your head. 'Twill be a big day for Ireland, Moira," he then said to your mother across the fire, "the day Dinny becomes a Masther." And your mother in reply just turned her eyes to Heaven.

Your father went with you himself the very next day to Masther Moroney and gave you in special charge to him, informing him that a Masther was to be made out of you. "Give him mim'ry," your father said. "The boy has all the brains he needs," and was not going to draw on

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Masther Moroney's stock, "but give him mim'ry and teach him al-jay-bra, and the rule o' three frontways and back, and give him all you have yourself and charge it to me." Masther Moroney faithfully promised to execute all your father's orders. And your mother sent him the next day by you a fine, big *meascán* of yellow butter.

And when Masther Moroney had given you all he had himself, you travelled to finish your education. More correctly speaking, you "trotted" for knowledge—sometimes galloped. For in those long, seven-mile journeys that you then began making every morning to the great town of Donegal, where there were houses on both sides of the street, to sit under the far-famed Masther MacRory, who built his big reputation on his astounding knowledge of "Jackson's Bookkeeping" and "Vosther's Arithmetic," you most frequently had to cross the hills and the dales at full speed to overtake the "early lesson."

Very autocratic was this Masther MacRory, too, as was only to be expected from a man famed for knowing not only "Vosther's Arithmetic" and "Jackson's Bookkeeping," but also the dizzy peaks of mensuration, reaching up to the solution of his renowned poetic problem which, it was admitted, no scholars in the world other than his could solve:

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“One day with a tinker I happened to sit,
Whose tongue ran a great deal too fast for
his wit.

He talked of his art with abundance of mettle,
So I asked him to make me a flat-bottomed kettle.
Let the bottom and top in diameter be
In just such proportion as five is to three.
Twelve inches the depth I proposed, and no more,
And to hold in ale gallons seven less than a score.

“He promised to do it and straight to work went,
But when he had made it, he found it too scant;
He altered it then, but the way he had done it
Although it held right the diameters failed it.
Thus making it often too big and too little,
The tinker at last had quite spoiled the kettle.

* * * * *

“Now he swears he will bring his said promise
to pass

Or else he will spoil every ounce of his brass.
Then to keep him from ruin I pray find him out
The diameters' length, for he'll ne'er do it, I
doubt.”

To have attended the school of such a man was
in itself a passport to local fame; to have been led
by him through the labyrinths of knowledge and
turned out of the Golden Gate with the Tinker
Problem an open page to you, assured your being

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mentioned at the wedding and the wake and in the chapel-yard with Masther MacRory himself, Boney-party, and Daniel O'Connell.

You indeed appreciated to the full your extraordinary privilege, and made the most of it during those three winters' and two summers' attendance at his school. The long journey every morning and every afternoon had its advantages. For as you ran to school in the lovely summer dawns, or in the magic moonlight or beauteous starlight of the winter mornings, you had a magnificent chance—denied the poor unfortunate fellows living too near the school—to memorize your tasks. And, in galloping home over the hills in the evening, you had a grand opportunity of repeating over and over, and fixing forever in your memory, every golden word from the Book of Knowledge that the great man had that day revealed to you. And, reaching home, you had such a roaring appetite for the mouth-watering dinner of tatties toasting for you by the blazing fire, and the grand pandy of milk which your mother had sitting on the table for you! But to tell the joys of that steaming-hot bowl of tea, with yellow-capped, crisp oat-bread, which came on the heels of the tatties and milk, words fail you!

And then the telling your father and mother, to their awe and amazement, the wonderful won-

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ders you had learned that day! And afterwards, the glorious stretching by the side of the big, blazing fire of turf and fir to learn your tasks! And your well-earned, sound, deep and dreamless sleep! And up before screek o' day in the morning again, and, after a big, hearty breakfast, away like the whirlwind on the road to greatness and glory once more! Och, there's sorrow a doubt about it, 'twas grand entirely!

In spite of your sleeved waistcoat, which paid the double debt of coat and vest, marking you as from the mountains and drawing upon you the jokes and jeers of the town-boys—who must have been millionaires' sons, for they all had regular jackets—you were springing into prominence as Masther MacRory's crack scholar and were usually selected by him when, for the aweing of visitors, he wanted a genius to do the problem of the Horse-Shoe Nails or to spell Antitrinitarian and Transubstantiation.

Till one day—a beautiful September afternoon it was—trotting home over the top of Altidoo, you were stopped by Father Pat, who, staff in hand, was returning from a sick-call in the remote mountains. In his own abrupt fashion, he hailed you: “Can you sing, sir?” And you hung your head and blushed and said you thought you could—a little. “Get up on that wall there and sing

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me 'O'Donnell Abu!' " And you mounted the rickety stone wall—it was the mearin' between Long Andy Meehan's land and Red Charley's—and sang a verse of "O'Donnell Abu!" as best you could for your nervousness.

Over the next field a lark with his liquid melody was making you ashamed of your every note, and a stray curlew, flying past, circled several times over the heads of yourself and your audience, wondering what it was all about, anyhow. You couldn't keep your mind off that lark and curlew while you sang, so that you thought you were surely making a botch of it. "That'll do!" Father Pat said curtly, when you had finished one verse. "Come down!" You came down—in every sense of the word.

But you were exalted to Heaven the next moment when he said to you: "How'd you like to teach a school!" You don't remember what you answered him at all; you only recollect his parting words: "Then come down to my house the morrow night for the key of Cloch Corr School." And three days after, still trembling lest you'd wake up, you found yourself actually a Masther, in charge of a great school with five windows and a splendidly thatched roof, and three-score-and-ten bright boys and girls, from a five-mile radius, in attendance.

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That was a great day entirely for you. When these three-score-and-ten pupils addressed you as Masther, you were past yourself with pride! And when they came up and laid their weekly penny upon your desk you swelled like a plutocrat! And when you had divided them into their eight classes, and started the Mill of Knowledge grinding (with more terrible din than you'd ever heard from any other mill in creation), and when you were commanding and running all eight classes at the one time, you realized that Napoleon Bonaparte was an overrated man, after all!

But when, at the quarter's end, you came home and made your father and mother speechless by counting down to them seven bright yellow pounds and pocketed for yourself ten whole shillings, you were on the ridge of the world, and wouldn't call a king your cousin. Old Earth was a good place and gay to live upon, and you saw no reason whatever why every man upon it shouldn't be his own emperor.

Empire, of course, is not without its drawbacks—its responsibilities. If you did not keep both eyes and ears and feet terribly active, and hands active sometimes, too, the playing of Crossy-Crowny and Willy-Wan was, in one class, apt to be substituted for mathematics; and in another, the telling of the wonderful story of the

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King of Ireland's Son's Journey to the Well of the World's End was likely to replace the more scientific style of geography; and the matching of featherweights for pre-prandial combats to displace Christian Doctrine in a third.

Hardly a week passed in which your mental activities were not taxed by the solicitous parent, frieze-coated and blustery, who held up all school business while you should calculate and inform him whether he should put wee Johnny on for priest, lawyer or doctor—the object of his solicitation, just then, though supposedly wrestling with the abstruse mysteries of “a-n an, o-x ox,” being surreptitiously engaged in inserting a crooked pin in the under-flesh of his big toe, for purpose of stimulating the young mathematician in front, who was in the throes of absorbing the “Threeses” tables.

On winter days you had the added tax of compelling every aspirant to carry, for the school fire, his daily contribution of two turf. And of watching, too, that Dinny the Dodger did not, by sleight of hand and strength of wrist, convert his single turf into two, just at the school door, and then enter with an assumption of innocence and uprightness which might well deceive the unsophisticated. And in guarding that none of the delinquents who failed to bring their contribution

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should warm bare feet and dirty hands at the fire for ten minutes—the special privilege and reward of everyone who dutifully carried turf tribute.

And you had to reckon, moreover, with Larry O'Connell in his rage and Madgie Mulhearn in her righteous wrath, when, like a whirlwind, they descended upon your little school, vowing vengeance sure and sudden on the very next *natarnal* rascal of your pupils who should violate their cherished turf-stacks. But when, on a cruel, sleety January morning, Johnny Tummony and his fellows had trotted five miles of mountain all the way from Shanveen, with the seven streams running from their scanty duds, and, finding themselves wanting in the pair of passports which could bring them to Heaven, in the shape of the big blazing school fire, beheld Larry the Niggard's big turf-stack crying aloud to the universe "Come and steal!"—human nature would, you knew, assert itself.

And while you, to the appeasing of Larry the Niggard, threatened awful threats upon the cowering Johnny and his confederates in crime, it is greatly to be feared that in your sinful heart you condoned highway robbery. And, after you had frightened the life and soul out of the Shanveen Ali Baba and Band of Thieves and sent

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Larry home rejoicing, you went back to the band of rascals and spoke angrily, commanding them to go to the fire that instant and dry themselves out, and let the blaze of the stolen turf burn shame into their bones. Maybe it did!

You took your proper place in the parish now—next to the priest. And all the world brought you reverence. You were gay as befitted one on whom greatness sat easily, and sporty as became a millionaire drawing a salary of thirty pounds a year—not to mention weekly school-pennies. You went through the world with open heart and hand. You had a penny to lend and a penny to spend; you gave a penny to the beggar, and a penny to the fiddler, and you bought ribbons for the girls at the fair.

You walked a pleased and flattered man among the great schoolmasters of the countryside; and a proud and envied man, when, some time later, you had a monitor appointed to assist you with your eight classes. The world was your football. You were honoured everywhere; you were invited everywhere. At the feast your place was the head of the table; the bridegroom was only next man to you at the wedding; at the wake you divided honours with the poor man (God rest him!) who was underboard. An accession of easy dignity came to you and a very pleasurable air

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of importance, and infinite wisdom and knowledge, so that it was no wonder your presence was coveted to grace all gatherings; and all parties consented that, if they lived to the age of Methuselah, they could not repay you for the honour you did them. In the chapel-yard an admiring group always surrounded you, hanging upon your words and treasuring the slightest as if it were golden.

On Saturday night, when *The Nation* was brought to you by Neil MacDermott, coming out from the Market, your house filled with neighbours hungering to hear the latest that concerned their poor country's checquered fortunes. And, from the top of the first left-hand column to the bottom of the last right-hand one, you read aloud every word and expounded each thing as you read it.

They shook their heads in speechless wonder at your facility in reading, without pause or stumble, the biggest words that the greatest orator of them all had used. And in the hearts of the old ones here at your house, just as in the minds of the youth at your school, you implanted something of that deep love for your suffering country that had burned in your own soul since in childhood you had first read the story of her wrongs. Yes, you were worthy master and teacher in that field.

But *noblesse oblige*. On a raging, December

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night about twelve, when you were sitting by the fire in your stocking soles preparatory to bedding, Denis Ruddy was likely to lift the latch and walk in and command you to stroll six miles with him over the bogs to Cruach-na-Copal to draw up the will of old Paddy Murrin, who had got "onaissy in his mind" in the middle of the night, and wouldn't rest or sleep till he had made his will. And, as likely as not, you might, three months after old Paddy's death, have to stand the brunt of Denis's anger because he, a full third cousin to Paddy's wife's niece, hadn't been mentioned in the will. Cormac Gildea pulled you from your sleep on the wildest night that ever fell from the Heavens to go three miles up the mountain to Cronna-Nyas and put the finishing touches to the final settlement of the ninety-year-old dispute about the march-ditch between the MacGinley Dubhs and the MacGinley Ruadhs. When March with its razor edge was skinning the snipes, Billy O'Boyle of Gleneany accorded you the privilege of surveying Carnaween mountain for him.

And, when you finished it alive, he got you to close your school for three days while you tramped with him over three mountain ranges and two glens into the heart of the County Donegal to ask the wife for him—a fine girl, by the way, with two hundred head of sheep and five two-year-olds,

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and a chest of linen, and plenishing for a new home—and he repaid you handsomely by the promise that you'd stand for his first.

You were grand correspondent for the parish, especially inditing letters to Amerikay, at the writing of which you were expected to take down in long hand five hundred and twenty-seven words a minute—Nancy Hannigan's rate when she spoke slowly, as in dictating to you—and on one sheet of paper set down the history of the parish during the twelve months that were gone, including the biography of every second person in it.

You must overlook the unintentional reflection on your scholarship when Shusie Gallagher, running out of both words and wind, wound up her dictation with "Please excuse haste and poor spellin'.—From your lovin' mother." But your humiliation, if you were foolish enough to feel such, was cured by the *meascán* of Shusie's loveliest golden butter, by crisp cakes of her bread, by beastings, socks, linen shirts, knitted underwear, bags of potatoes, melpers of meal, and every other tribute paid you that a king could expect.

And when you wanted your handful of hay, or your lock of turf, or grain of corn home, horses, asses and mules, carts and barrows, boys, men and children thronged the roads around as if a Cæsar had bid them in. And remember, in this enumera-

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tion of your rewards, I have taken no account of the heart-felt prayers put up for you in the course of a hundred nightly Rosaries, and the old women's blessings piled on your head Heaven-high. The Recording Angel's credit books surely overflowed in your days, giving him grievance against the Masther of Cloch Corr for having to invest in a brand-new set, all on the Masther's account.

But, even though you had now won the undisputed distinction of being among the greatest men in the world, you, unlike most great men, dared not for a day rest upon your laurels. You had ever to be on your guard to maintain your supremacy, for you knew not when, like a thief in the night, Fate should overtake you—at the school, at the wake, on the flags of the chapel-yard, or amid the festivities of christening or wedding.

If the Doorin men, who came from old Masther Maguire's district in the very lower end of the parish, and passed your school with their turf carts on the way to the bog, failed to floor you with the mathematical poser they carried to you from him: "Good morrow to you, neighbour and your twenty geese," then Masther McLoon's three crack scholars, who, in their vacation time, went like roaring lions over the hills

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seeking what poor unfortunate Masther they might devour, sprang at you their latest:

“On a circular lot, rich with various grasses,
Which contained just one acre, I tied up three asses
In three equal circles, and the largest that’s found
Within the circumference of an acre of ground.
Now I want you to tell me the length of the string
That attachéd each ass to his circle or ring.
Also the space occupied by each ass
And how much there remains of the acre of
grass;”

—or: “If we gave you, Masther, an eight-gallon keg filled with whiskey, and a five-gallon keg and a three-gallon keg both empty, and no other measure, instrument or implement whatsoever, how will you measure us out four gallons of that whiskey, not a drop more and not a drop less?”—all work in your school being that day suspended until you, by superhuman effort and at loss of much perspiration, wrung out the solution—to the uncontrolled joy of your scholars and the complete down-casting of the lions, who, with drooped tail and no more roaring, took their departure.

But still in danger are you to meet your Waterloo when the *Bacach Ruadh* (red-haired beggarman), audacious as he is ignorant, challenges you in the chapel-yard to spell

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bombergladoflimflastifamuloquentialities, to the awe and wonder of the open-mouthed multitude who marvel at the extraordinary brains the *Bacach's* uncombed crop of red hair conceals. And indeed a real Waterloo it might have been the night of Corney Heggarty's wake, when the same ignorant, impudent fellow publicly challenged you across the floor:

"Masther, my learned and honourable friend, take Joe-ology, Al-jay-bra, Trigonometry, Fluxions, Joe-graphy, Jurie's Prudence, the Confluxion of the Systems, Di-sec-tations, Sequestrations, Disquisitions, Mathematics or the Influential carcasses—on which of all these larned things is it your prefermentation that I should test your eruditional accomplishments?"

To which you suitably replied: "Sirrah! From my rare intellectual altitudes I gaze with infinite contempt alloyed with despicable commiseration on the pitiable accumulation and aggregation of unmitigated balderdash with which you have the audacious temerity to address me!"

Whereupon he retorted:

"Let no charlatanical fop presume to dispute the atrocious voracity of my achromatical qualifications, for I'm a heterogeneous cosmopolite perambulating and differentiating intricate problematics throughout the circumambient localities



SPELL BOMBERGLADOFLIMFLASTIFAMULOQUENTIALITIES

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which I have mesmerized into a conglomerate catastrophe!"

And you rejoined: "Sirrah! of all subjects in the educational curriculum of the universe from the Alpha to the Omega of the same, select and indicate one and I shall instantaneously proceed to expose your accumulated ignorance to the gaze of a commiserating public!"

Then he—the neighbours now having been aroused to a tremendous pitch of excitement:

"Having given the paralysis of the hypotenuse, can you calculate, enumerate and dimonstrate for me, by the square and kibe roots of Joe-ometry and Trigonometry, how many fathoms of wind blew through the chancel windy of Donegal's ould abbey last Janiary was a twelve month?"

And finally poor you, your whole name, fame, fortune and prestige trembling in the balance as you heard the breathless neighbours whisper: "Faith, that's a tarror!" your good angel coming to your aid with a flash of inspiration, drew from your vest pocket a bit of chalk, cleared the center of the floor and on the flag there drew a right-angle triangle A, B, C, and, courageously looking the *Bacach* in the eye, said:

"Let A B C be a right-angled triangle, having the right angle at B. I say that the squares on the base and perpendicular, AB and BC, are to-

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gether equal to the square on the hypotenuse AC. Prove it, or forever after hold your tongue!" With which you flung the chalk, like glove of gallant knight, at the scoundrel's feet.

The confounded *Bacach* held his tongue, and, next morning, a broken man, quitted forever the parish where now his great prestige was gone. And you were henceforth taller by his prestige added on to your own—a dizzy height indeed.

Yes, you had great love for fine language, for those beautiful, long words that, like a child with toffy string, one might knot upon his tongue and feel for a sweet, long time under his palate. Father Pat had delight in hearing you use your fine language and loved, too, to have the Bishop hear it when he came on his rounds. Yet it nearly betrayed you into difficulty that day you accompanied His Reverence to Drimgarman Barr, to Michael MacCallion's, where he was going to give the last rites to poor old Peggy.

You, presuming that Peggy's hearing was not as good as it used to be, unfortunately whispered to Father Pat, as you entered the door: "Sir, I believe she is a nonogenarian," and Peggy, who for all her four-score and ten (and some more) could still hear the grass growing, lifted her head in the bed that was in the kitchen outshot, wailing: "Och-och-a-nee! Och-och-a-nee! O, Masther!

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that I should live to this time o' day to hear you say that of me. Och-och-a-nee! Your Reverence, darlin', surely wouldn't believe it o' me!"

Father Pat saved the situation. "Is it believe it, Peggy? Not if the Bishop of the diocese himself stood there on the floor and told it to me." And you breathed again, and Peggy, serene in a saved reputation, settled herself to crown a spotless life by an exemplary death.

You never married, because you never found a girl in the countryside who could properly appreciate the sublime passages of Homer with which you tried to win her heart. But your old father and your old mother were care enough for you, and care well for them you did. As became a man of great income, you lavished money on them, giving them not only of comforts but of luxuries likewise. Their days were smooth and their nights restful. Their hearts were happy; their souls were always swelled with pride for you. They passed away, calling down the blessing of God on the best son (they said) that father or mother ever knew.

You not only did your duty to your father and mother, but you did your duty to your country likewise. For poor Ireland always had a warm corner in your warm heart. You made your pupils not scholars only, but patriots likewise. Of course,

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it was against the rules laid down for school-masters by a paternal government that the name of Ireland should be mentioned in the school outside the geography lesson. You strictly observed the rule, to be sure, but the title "Geography" got a generous interpretation from you; and the inventor of the science would have had his eyes opened, had he, rising from his grave, wandered into the little thatched schoolhouse of Cloch Corr, and felt the fire and saw the red blood that you put into a subject which he had thought to be as dry as Adam's dust; and witnessed pairs of childish eyes fill with tears, and little mouths set hard, and little fists clench under inspiration of a subject that he had never dreamed had a soul!

Yes, you did your duty by your pupils, your parents and your country. In doing so you grew old gracefully, and the years were mellow, and still more and more honour came with your gray hairs. In your own large-hearted way you looked down with leniency on a new class of—not Masthers—but just school-teachers that the colleges were turning out, as a sausage machine turns out sausages; smart, pert youngsters, dressed in shop-clothes, riding bicycles, swallowing certain books, teaching how to swing the arms and how to fill the lungs to children who hungered to have their minds filled and the joints of their intellects

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supplied. School-teachers who, moreover, are salaried like Cæsars, with sixty pounds a year and perquisites; just twice what lavishly remunerated *Men* in your salad days.

The world is surely rushing to ruin: and 'tis well, after all, that your years in it are short. However, except to crack an occasional classic joke on them (which, of course, they do not understand), whenever they presume to raise their squeak in your presence, you are tolerant with them. As becomes a giant among pigmies, you extend to them a real and sincere pity.

The men, the old-timers, the Masthers, on Pension Saturday meet in Donegal Market and withdraw to Larry MacCue's to have a social glass, and talk of the days when there were giants, and to tell for the ten thousandth time the biting rejoinder (unequalled by anything outside the classics) that Masther MacGlinchey gave the officious inspector; and to recite the eighteen poems, each of two hundred lines, more or less, which embody the learned controversy carried on (via the Long Beggarman) between Masther Corrigan of Killaghtee and the unseen genius, Masther Mulvanny, who lived somewhere up in County Mayo; to put again, one to the other, some of the old posers that in these degenerate days are falling into disrepute; and to saunter home in the

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evening, stopping at this house and that and renewing your learned controversies and cause the old ones in the chimney corner to shake their heads and say: "Ay, this is the last of the rale ones, and more's the pity!"

Yes, soon the green quilt will be drawn over you, and sure 'twould be some consolation to you that day if you could see how the gray-headed ones will look in and drop a tear on the lowered coffin and say: "Well, his like will never walk the world again. The Heavens be his bed!"

A DAY IN THE BOG

DO you mind the turf-cutting? The turf-cutting in Donegal! the turf-cutting in the lone bogs, away among the far hills, in the merry May time, when the sun was bright and the air was balmy, and the first flowers were showing on the slopes, and the marsh-mallows by the wayside; and the milky-white *cean-a-bhans* were broidering the bogs; and the bee was humming, and the water-wagtail twittering; and the lark spilling his melody from above—when the bog, at most times lonely, was at length lively with the quick-working little groups that dotted it—the men and bigger boys fast plying the spade, and slinging the clean-cut turf high up into the eager hands that waited to catch it soft and sodden, and bear it back to the clear, dry ground behind, where the sun, and the wind, and the air would win the peat that should serve to feed a fine fire. Oh, the turf-cutting! the glorious turf-cutting! the happy turf-cutting! the turf-cutting in the bogs of Ireland!

But, to be sure, 'twasn't *all* merriment, and 'twasn't *all* poetry, the same turf-cutting in your lovely, lonely bogs. It ever meant a long day's work, and a strong day's work and hard—

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bracingly begun before the sun rolled above the rim of the bog, and ended, with aching back and raging appetite, after he had gone to rest again, and was pulling black curtains between him and the world.

At four o'clock in the morning your father, who never seemed to sleep when there was anything to do, was already afoot in the little mountain cabin, and noisily awaking every mother's son and daughter of you, and hastening you from your beds before you got the gates of dream-land shut. By five o'clock the clan-jaffrey of you have stowed away a breakfast of oaten stirabout that would provision a privateer, and with bottles of new milk, and fadges of well-hardened, thickly-buttered oatcake, and pocketsful of hard-boiled eggs, leave behind you the little house with the candle in its little window, and, in the breaking dawn, are treading an uncertain way down the uneven *cassey* that leads from your door to the road, cheerily chattering and heartily laughing at one another's mishaps as you go. On the road, your father is impatiently holding a donkey by the head, waiting for the girls to take their place in the high-caged cart. The cage swings open; the girls bounce in; the donkey is released, and off along the hard, white road it trots, click-clack, click-clack, the girls laughing gleefully, while your

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father and yourselves, by long and hasty strides, kill yourselves trying to keep up to the mighty wise little animal, which knows well, since such early start is made, that a big day's work lies ahead, and extraordinary haste is called for.

On the way you fall in with many another hurrying party. So, in the bog, the round red sun rises upon a lively scene—a pleasant contrast with the usually dreary aspect of the white-patched, great and wide stretches of waste. Here and there over the vast surface of it you see high-caged carts, little and big, up-ended; and the animals that drew them, the donkeys and horses, picking stray blades of grass and soft tops of heather, as they wander wide. Reeks of blue smoke are mounting on the morning air from a hundred small fires built nigh the carts, and a hundred family parties, bareheaded and barefooted, each upon a turf-bank near their own fire, are hard at work plying the spade, or catching, or throwing, or carrying, or wheeling the fresh turf, or setting drier ones on end, four or five together—"footing" them. The father's spade, or elder brother's, works mortal fast indeed; carving its way through the soft bank, sharp and quick, the bright blade, for a second deep-buried, is flashing aloft the next instant, and a clean turf is flying from it into the waiting hands that quickly pass

A DAY IN THE BOG

it far from its bed. Four, or five, or six sweating people, father, and sisters, and brothers, take little time—you'd think—to hearken to the lark's song or the bees' hum, to enjoy the blue sky, or the bright hills beyond the bog, or the white sunshine that is frisking upon them, or the sweet-smelling smoke that is curling above. Keeping hands and eyes close upon their labour, they work hard and still harder as the sun mounts high and still higher. But, for all that, don't conceit yourself that the beauty is lost on them. It is in their hearts as they work, their blood leaps the quicker for it; the lively tune, and glad song, and merry joke, come lightly from their lips. The black bog is bright, and the lone bog full of life, and the silent bog filled with music, with whistle and song, with laughter, chat and cheery hail.

Till the white sun has reached its height, and passed it, there is neither cease nor pause. Many a suddenly-sprung turf-cutting contest has been hotly fought out, and many a victor loudly acclaimed. "Patrick's Andy walked his floor* at the rate of a weddin', but Manis Gildea swept his like a blaze o' whins." But, then, "The match of Manis wasn't within the five baronies, and his bate couldn't be got though you screenged Ireland with a herrin' net; and as for Andy, his aigual was

*A "floor" is a strip or bog-bank cleaned for cutting.

A DAY IN THE BOG

far to find." For the champion turf-cutter is a hero not without honour in his own country, and in his own way he may gather to himself nigh as much glory as the schoolmaster. His name is spoken proudly at wedding, wake and fair, and he holds a high place in the councils of his neighbours. He toils hard for the fame that finally comes to him, and has the consolation of knowing that for a generation after the "daisy quilt" is pulled over him his name will be passed with pride, and his deeds paraded by the wondering ones he leaves behind.

After midday, when appetites are keen as a March blast, your father, to the joy of all, says:

"That'll do, childer. Let us in God's name have food to eat, and rest for our limbs." And turf and turf-barrows are instantly dropped, and, with a rousing cheer, you all rush for the cart where the coveted things are stored. Close to the fire the Cloth of Plenty is untied, and stacks of buttered oatcake, mounds of eggs, and mountains of milk-bottles disclosed to hungry eyes. Into the fire the eggs are put for roasting. Down on the bog-floor, by the piles of eatables and drinkables, you all squat. Your father, taking off his hat, blesses himself, and you all follow the good example. With hearty good-will you then "fall to," and the carnage begins.

A DAY IN THE BOG

Notwithstanding the ravenous hunger that each of you brings to the feast, there is always time for a joke between bites, and the gay laughter goes forward without cessation. At the tail of the feasting your father draws out his pipe, and fills and lights it, stretches his legs from him, gets his back against a pile of turf and smokes, in high content with himself and the world. You and your brothers step across to the neighbouring parties, and have your whispers with the blushing *cailini* there; while, just to strike a balance, the boys from there cross over to tell your girls what sort the weather is going to be to-morrow. But there's only little time for intercourse just now. The call of a dozen fathers: "To your work, brave boys!" soon rings out. And, with brightness in your eyes and merry music on your lips, tripping you come to your task once more, and in a few minutes' time the bog is again busy with a toiling multitude.

When, after a long day and a glad day, the sun has at last left the pearly sky, and the shadows, waving their dark wands, come after you all, now tired and songless, but still merry, you drop spade and barrow, gather your alls, pursue, bring back and harness the donkey, get the girls into the cart, and, wearing a pleasant cloak of fatigue, set your steps on the homeward way. A supper

A DAY IN THE BOG

fit for a king is before you as you burst into the warm kitchen of your cabin, nigh to bedtime—a mountain of flowery potatoes, still steaming, and laughing through their jackets, hillocks of yellow butter flanking it, and lochs of thick-milk—for, surely, little less than lochs are the great bowls of it that are set down, one for each man, and boy, and girl. The envy of a king would be the appetites that each of you brings home with you from the bog; and the envy of a king might well be the relish with which you attack the mountain of laughing potatoes; and certainly the envy of a king would be the happy hearts and the sleep-filled heads, and glad, tired limbs, which, when Rosary is said, you stretch upon welcome beds.

Before yet the turf is fully won, and dragged home, and stacked in the garden, there's many another long and toilsome, joyous, bright day in the bog still ahead of you. And after the turf is won, and safely stacked at home, on many a winter's night will the high-leaping, bright-blazing turf fire warm you and cheer you, as you propound riddles, and sing songs, and hearken to the old, old, beautiful tales and *laoidhs* that happily while away the surly, gurdy, rainy, stormy, blowy, snowy winter nights, and repay you, happy-hearted children of all ages, for many a sore, toilsome, glorious day in the bog!

THE *BACACH*

THOSE individuals who affect genteel English might call him Beggar—an impolite name, as well as an unworthy one, for such a personage. You, and all of you, knew him as the *Bacach*. He was usually a sturdy, big fellow, whose soul long ago rose above menial and manual labour. Yet he tolerated those drudges amongst you who grubbed in the earth for an existence. But he himself always held his head to heaven, and let you pay him tribute—not alms. His territory extended over long leagues. As he took to the roads, he wore his alms-bags, half a dozen of them, gaily, and swung his staff, whistling as he went.

He knew himself monarch of the multitude, and carried himself as a sovereign should, moving amongst subjects whom he did not altogether despise.

There was warm welcome for him always when he thrust in his head at your door, hurling blessings at herself, and yourself, and the children. You welcomed him for many reasons. In the first place, because he was one of God's poor—even

*The *bacach*, or beggarman, is a great power and tyrant among the charitable, good-hearted people in the mountainous parts of Ireland.

THE *BACACH*

though he lived more luxuriously than yourself, and never needed to take thought for the morrow. And, again, because you knew that he was a man of great qualities, well worth cultivating. And, still further, because he was your newspaper. Any single one of these was sufficient in itself to make his welcome; but all three were overwhelming.

While Molly emptied her tribute (potatoes or meal or good bake-bread) into his bags, he informed you of all the happenings, not merely of the countryside, but of the world.

Even if he had not the world's news literally correct, at least it lost nothing in the carrying. If he told you of a battle in which ten thousand men were reported killed and fifty thousand fatally wounded, you had the consolation of knowing that at least you were not denied any part of the sensation that was rightly your due. He never gave short measure. And the most contemptible stickler for prosaic facts could not, anyhow, deny that, in the foregoing instance, there was at least a horse killed, and several human beings seriously injured. His news, like the old-time novels, was always founded upon strict fact.

As was not merely pardonable but proper, in a genius, he made his own of all news he had heard, supplied its shortcomings, cast it in dramatic shape, and retailed it, not necessarily in the crude

THE *BACACH*

way in which it did occur, but in the finished way in which it should have occurred. And in doing this he was never untruthful, only artistic—and wishful, too, to satisfy the natural cravings of humanity (which in the remote mountains was the same as in the city).

When he quit your house, bearing away heavier bags, he left you under a weighty sense of obligation to him, and wishing ardently that tribute time came thrice a week instead of once. He had the knack of striking the warmest houses of the parish at meal time, when he honoured them all by consenting to partake of the best that was being provided. On a brisk day he covered a deal of ground. He stuck not prosaically to any highway, but footed it by field and flood, hill and dale, mountain and moor, as he met them. For he was in all things a scorner of the paths beaten by you, little men. As he managed to reach at meal time the house noted for its lavish board, so likewise night had the habit of overtaking him by the most comfortable hearth in the townland—where, by his own invitation, he shed his bags and made himself at home till morning. Any one of God's poor was, of course, welcome to quarter himself where he would, because you knew that the homeless were equally entitled with yourself to the roof that God raised over you and to a share of the

THE *BACACH*

bite that you struggled for. Any of God's poor were welcome to this (which you always, and rightly, referred to as "their share"), but the royal *bacach* had a welcome and twenty to it. Moreover, where he stopped, he received no honour, but only conferred one. And, keenly alive to this fact, you treated him accordingly. The best in the house was at his behest; and, though for a bed he had only the usual wandering one's couch, a straw shake-down, this was given him by the hearth, so that he slept more warmly and more comfortably than did you, his honoured host.

To be sure he ruled you—as you deserved—with a rod of iron, and, while he honoured your house by his presence, exacted the respect that was his due and your loyal submission that was something short of slavish.

After a luxurious supper he, of course, occupied the *bean-a-tighe's* seat in the chimney corner, and, there indulging in a post-prandial pipe, held the house spellbound as he unfolded to you his own narrative of the world's doings and misdoings, enriching the narration with pungent comment and confident prediction. He arbitrated between the Great Powers, if they were at variance, and in princely fashion transferred whole slices of geography from one to the

THE *BACACH*

other for justice' sake—or for peace. The Irish Question he settled nightly, bestowing upon our distracted country a generous measure of Home Rule—to be followed in a few years by total independence under a king of his own choosing.

When Rosary time arrived, he drew forth his beads and ordered the household upon their knees, whilst he then—still usurping the *bean-a-tighe's* place—led you all in prayer. To the crack prayers of the parish this was ever a treat. But not quite so enthusiastic were those of more temperate devotional instincts. For the *bacach* was vain of his praying powers—and with good reason, too, as you who so often (and long) knelt under him must readily confess.

Molly herself was no mean hand at the praying, as the groaning children will testify; but even she freely admitted that the *bacach's* prayers were only well begun where hers left off. Accordingly, it was an eminent spiritual treat when the *bacach* led the Rosary. Yet you very much fear that the unregenerate of the younger generation did not derive from his devotional exercises the invigorating spiritual refreshment that they should. The grip of the world, the flesh and the devil was felt even in your remote mountains; so the minds of many youngsters were upon the aches that racked their knees when, in harmony with the *bacach's*,

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they should have been lifted to things celestial. In the tone of their response, you fear, there was sometimes exasperation, when there should be devotion; and a groan oftentimes was heard from these grovelling sinners, when a note of joy was expected. And the *bacach*, well knowing the hold which the Prince of Darkness has upon the wayward hearts of youth, usually, as his prayers proceeded, turned towards them a stern—not to say wrathful—face, and prayed at them in fast, and all but furious, tones. He would ask for “one Pather-a-Navvy for the slothful of body and soul, that their eyes may be opened to the wickedness of their ways, and their flintsomeness of heart moderated by the penetrating warnings of grace.” It is in these trimmings (as you called them) to the Rosary that the *bacach* pre-eminently shone. And the trimmings were, with him, always far and away more extensive than the piece. And it is these trimmings that, straw by straw, seemed to break both back and knees—and heart, too—of the sinful youth. “Let us offer up one Pather-a-Navvy for our friends and re-al-atives far and near, and abroad in the worl’.” “Another Pather-a-Navvy for the houseless and homeless, and all poor wanderers on God’s earth that has no roof over their heads this night—that the Lord may yet lead them to everlasting shelter in under the dazzling

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roof of heaven!" "For all who are in sickness, soreness, or sorrow, want or advarsity, trials or troubles—one Pather-a-Navvy from our hearts."

"For sojers and sailors, and all who are at say on the ocean, with no rush bush to hould by, that God may preserve them from watery graves, and unprovided-for daiths — wan Pather-a-Navvy."

"For our poor boys and girls in Amirikay, and foreign parts, that God may strengthen their arms, and lighten their troubles, and soften to them the hearts of the stranger, and that they may never do nothing to bring sin, shame, sorrow nor disgrace on them or theirs, or anyone belongin' to them—one Pather-a-Navvy from our hearts."

"For the poor sufferin' souls in Purgatory—for our fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, kith and kin, and likewise for the poor souls who are killed in wars, and have no one to pray for them—one Pather-a-Navvy." "One other Pather-a-Navvy to the merciful Lord to preserve this house, and everyone in it from the doleful death of *cholera morbis*—that the good Lord may lighten its terrors, and weaken its ravages, and keep it far from us, and from all poor sinners on the face of this earth." And this latter good prayer he fervently clung to, notwithstanding the fact that the ravages of the dread disease had, fortunately, been unknown in the land for some generations.

THE *BACACH*

As he was great upon prayer, the *bacach* was likewise great upon prophecy, and could fascinate you a thousand times by reciting from beginning to end the prophecies of your great and much-loved St. Colm Cille. And he could interpret them to the meanest understanding, making clear what was meant by the black pig which, belching fire, was to run through Barnes Gap, and the white rod that was to pass round Ireland; likewise explain the three black taxes, which, before the coming of the final great troubles, were to be levied and lifted with steel hands. He could calculate, almost to a day, the period which was to fulfil that part of the prophecy foretelling that the seed should rot beneath the sod and the crops be in mourning; and also when the cow should bring the full of her horn of money, and the black cloud come up in the east, and the red wind blow out of the west. Furthermore, he could assure his marvelling listeners that the strongest, surest sign which was to precede the final act in poor Ireland's tragedy was now with them—for in the Rosses there lived the red-headed miller with two thumbs on one hand, the wheel of whose mill, as foretold, should turn three times with the blood that was to flow, before our freedom was won.

Finally, before the family retired, and the *bacach* couched him on his shake-down, he con-

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sidered it his duty to test the educational progress of the youth of the household.

“In mudeelis, in clanonis;

In firtaris, in oaknonis,

—that’s a little thrifle of Greek; could you consther it for me, Johneen?” But as it was surely Greek to poor Johneen, who had, the Wednesday before, been promoted to reading words of two syllables, the trembling little student shook his head. Whereupon the *bacach*, shaking his head, would proceed to “take him on the Scriptures.” “Can you tell me, me fine young New-o-phyte, the connection between the Bloody Wars and the Com-ics seen in the sky—referred to in Holy Write, eighteenth and nineteenth Revolutions, thirteenth chapture, nine-and-twentieth and followin’ varses?” But Johneen was just as shamefully deficient in Holy Writ as in Greek. “Well, then, an aisier wan, more shooted to your sarcumscribed intellectuality: From the Canine laws of the Holy Romans, can you prove to me that the time, and times, and half a time, predicted by Colm Cille for the landin’ of the Spaniards in Donegal must occur in the present reign of the thirteenth queen and king of haresy in England, Victoria being both king and queen—Queen of England and Imp’ror of India? Ye can’t? Very well, then just a thrifle in Coney-Sections.

THE *BACACH*

‘As I was goin’ to sweet Kildives,
I met a man with seven wives;
And every wife had seven sacks;
In every sack was seven cats,
And every cat had seven kittens.
Now, kittens, cats, sacks and wives,
How many went to sweet Kildives?’ ”

But little Johnneen, dumbfounded by the mightiness of a brain-racking mathematical problem that was fitted to floor a College President, fled for the shelter of his mother’s skirts—and in his heart resolved never after to set up for a scholar.

And all of you went to sleep that night marveling once again at the mightiness of the intellect of him who had deigned to do you the honour of breaking bread, and sheltering for the night, beneath your pitiably humble roof.

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YOUR parish—and in this sure it was only like any other mountain parish in Ireland—had done homage to kindly despot after kindly despot as *bacach* succeeded *bacach* in imposing sway upon the charitable-hearted. But the *Bacach Mor* (Big Beggarman) maybe reigned longer and held a heavier rod over you, his worshippers, than did any who preceded him. His knightly figure was to be seen, and his grave commanding voice heard, and awe-inspiring presence felt, in the chimney-corner of one or other of the warmest houses in the parish for many a long year, till he was as much of an institution as the Lazy Bush or Garrow-meena Crossroads. He was kindly always—while you were good. But when you needed it, and it was salutary for your souls, he could be as punitive as the potato-blight. And to both these merited scourges you bowed your head uncomplainingly.

He had entered Killymard a comparatively young man, and taken it for his own—by his splendid personality vanquishing the two *bacachs* who had been laying it under tribute ere his advent. In it he grew fat, and indolent, and (you

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must confess) sometimes ill-tempered, as cannot be helped by one spoilt by too absolute and too worshipful submission of his subjects. And lazily content, he here resigned himself to rest on his laurels, and wear out his remaining days lording it over you, unworthy of the honour though you oftentimes proved yourselves.

But God will still dispose even though *bacachs* propose. And it was so in this case. For when the *Bacach Mor* was lulled into a sense of false security a knight-errant suddenly appeared in the parish, in the person of the *Bacach Fada*. He was a muscular, lithe, jaunty, tall fellow, who carried his myriad bags just like that dandy they called Beau Nash might carry his ball-clothes. He was a superior fellow entirely, who, somehow, inspired you all with respect and awe immediately he dawned on you. He must have only risen into the fifties, while the *Bacach Mor* was dropping into the seventies. And the *Bacach Mor's* soul was troubled the first minute he heard of this detested invader.

The *Bacach Fada* laid everyone of you under the most abject allegiance to him in every house in which he struck his staff; and, when demanding the parish charity, in the tone of his voice was a bark that meant business. So you knew that he

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must be a great fellow entirely, must this *Bacach Fada*.

On the very first day on which he arrived, from the-Lord-only-knows-where, Father Dan, who right heartily disliked what he daringly called "sturdy vagabonds," met up with him on the road, and, reining in his sorry grey mare, and rickety car, shouted at him, "Heigh, fellow! what business brings you into this parish?"

"The same business as yourself," the *Bacach Fada* replied, taking a start out of his Reverence—"the same business as yourself, your Reverence—trying to take all I can from innocent people. If you say nothin'," said he, with exasperating confidentiality, "I'll say nothin'. Good-bye!" And before poor Father Dan recovered from his dumb-foundedness the *bacach* strode past him, his oak staff gaily swinging, his tatters flying, and his bags dangling airily, going off with the honours of war.

Unanimously, as you fell in with the *Bacach Fada*, you assented that the *Bacach Mor* was eclipsed. And the *Bacach Mor*, as he heard story after story of the newcomer, felt the sceptre shake in his grasp, and—you are afraid—mortally hated the fellow ere yet he had encountered him.

'Twas in Padeen MacMullans' that they met for the first time. You mind it well. You were there. The whole world was there—for you all

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expected the meeting and mental combat. The *Bacach Mor*, enthroned in the chimney-corner, had been acting the autocrat over the household—trembling children and all. He gasped—it was plain to be seen—when the *Bacach Fada* suddenly entered the door, casting at the household a “God’s blissin’ on all here, barrin’ the cat. An’ on you, too, sir,” to the scowling *Bacach Mor*, who was now mustering all his latent scorn for the purpose of withering the fellow. But, alas, the *Bacach Fada* seemed to mind his scowl no more than he did his smile. He planted his staff, and shed his bags, commanding the household in supercilious tone as he did so; and then enthroned himself in the chimney-corner opposite him whose seat he had come to usurp.

The *Bacach Mor* waited impatiently for the opening fire from the enemy. But he was bitterly disappointed. The *Bacach Fada* crushingly ignored him. He bore himself with a calmness and a seeming unconsciousness of the former’s presence that was more terribly effective than could have been the fiercest frontal assault. He had a look and a command for every individual in the house, except the ignored one, who would have parted with half his kingdom for a deliberate attack from this marauder. The cool, calculating knavery of the interloper struck a chill to the heart

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of the *Bacach Mor*, and dumbfounded him. The *Bacach Fada* demanded supper, chatted away with lofty ease while it was in preparation, and ate it, when ready, with the indifference of one who was used to sup in kings' courts. When the meal was finished, he ordered the abashed children around his knee, and, audaciously usurping what was the universally-acknowledged privilege of the *Bacach Mor*, began putting them "through their facin's" in grammar, arithmetic and history, both sacred and profane—with the nonchalant ease of a scholar who had taken all knowledge for his province. He propounded to them posers that even took away the breath of the *Bacach Mor*. When he had riddled the children, and exposed their utter ignorance of the most elementary knowledge that his great mind could take notice of, he suddenly turned full face upon the *Bacach Mor* and hurled at that individual a string of questions that, in their dazing incomprehensibility (to common minds like yours and the neighbours'), completely eclipsed the most admirably astounding that the latter had himself ever propounded. The *Bacach Mor* gasped for breath—and, having got it, bent upon the *Bacach Fada* his heaviest artillery, which, however, now seemed to you like so much toy-gun play opposed to the real thing. The unequal duel, which you followed with breathless suspense, con-

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tinued for maybe half an hour. At the end of that time the *Bacach Mor*, for whom you were now feeling the most painful sympathy, had spent all his ammunition, whilst it was easily seen that his opponent had not yet well broken upon his stock.

“To your knees for the Rosary!” The *Bacach Fada* drew out and jangled at the family a rosary of the largest beads that had ever dazzled you.

The fellow was making free with the first fruits of his victory. With the *Bacach Mor* present, not the most courageous had ever before dared to usurp his unquestionable prerogative of leading in prayer. Now all, tacitly acknowledging the new despot, sank like one man upon their knees. Even the *Bacach Mor*, after some moments’ hesitation, rolled from his chair with a groan of disgust, and assumed a kneeling posture likewise. The *Bacach Fada* led the Rosary in a manner that was inspiring and impressive to everyone of you who hearkened and meekly followed. His calm, strong, assertive voice, as it swung along through Pater and through Ave, searched the very corners of the house, terrorizing even the *Bacach Mor*. He found his voice, though, when, after everyone else had led in a decade, his opponent invited him to add his! Then, remembering that his place was to order, not to be ordered—to lead instead of being led—the *Bacach Mor*, stung into his sharpest retort,

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replied: "I put no spoon into this hipple-critical hash." The *Bacach Fada* did not annihilate him by replying in kind; but, picking up the decade himself, prayed at the *Bacach Mor* with look and tone that certainly awed the house, and must have made the rude one shiver in his soul.

The Rosary finished, and the children put to bed in the outshot, and your pipes lighted, the *Bacach Mor* bravely entered the lists for the final and deciding joust. Before him, no man had been known with such store of ancient lays and tales, and old-world lore. In this field he would surely put his hated enemy out of combat. But, to his confounding, and the amazement of all, this newcomer King met lay after lay, and capped story with story, as far as the *Bacach Mor* would or could go. And when far in the night, the *Bacach Mor's* store being exhausted, and he himself in like case, he thought strategically to cover his retreat by quoting precedent from ancient story, and time long gone.

"The hairoes of old," he said, "gave a third of the night only to stories and lays, and the rehearsal of wonderful adventures."

"The hairoes of old," the *Bacach Fada* retorted, "gave a third o' the night only to stories and lays, and the rehearsal of wonderful adventures, but you an' me are goin' to exemplificate to our audi-

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ence that the hairoes of the present day takes the win' out o' the sails of them of old. We'll give the *whole* of the night to the same things. I'm now goin'," said he, as he shook the ashes out of his pipe and proceeded to refill it, "to rehearse the wonderful adventures of the King of Ireland's Thirteen Sons, every one of which undaunted champions we'll follow individually from start to finish of his career." The *Bacach Mor*, when he heard this, rolled over with a groan.

And when the *Bacach Fada*, after cantering through the preliminary history, began upon the starting away from home of the First Son the *Bacach Mor* rolled over upon his other side, and groaned again with a groan that went to all your hearts. And ere the Second Son was turned to rock by the stroke of the wizard's rod the *Bacach Mor* snored deafeningly.

The *Bacach Mor* was missed when, in Padeen MacMullen's house, they arose the following morning. The next you heard of him he had pitched his tent on the other side of the hills, in the far-away Glenties parish.

The Masther, when he heard the news, said: "The Lord has delivered you from Nairo. But Satan has sent you Caligula."

Whatever he meant by that.

DENIS A-CUINN AND THE GREY MAN

HAUNTING mystery and magic were in the world then. And magicians, too—some good, some bad. You never did meet any of them yourself, though you longed to. But you heard of them in plenty. Many men who were old when you were young had encountered them. Fascinated, spellbound, sometimes thunderstruck, you sat open-mouthed, with your heels in the ashes, hearing the wise old ones tell either their own adventure, true as it was wonderful, or the astounding adventure of one whom they had the pride of knowing. And it was a rare pride, surely.

Many's the one of them had known Denis a-Cuinn in his day. And no one of them ever forgot him or could forget his extraordinary history the time he travelled to Dublin with the Grey Man. Many a time you listened, entranced, to the telling:

In me grandfather's day Denis a-Cuinn lived at the back of Glencoagh hill. The family was small and helpless and plenty of them in it; so Denis had a struggle to live at all, let alone pay a rack rent. Denis "fell behind" three or four

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years with the rent, and the agent noticed him to quit—which meant downright ruin, or the Workhouse, for the poor fellow, out and out. He didn't know what to do, but God put it into his head to go to Dublin to see the landlord himself, and lay his case before him. It was small stock he owned, but he had one snug little calf that he took out and sold and got a pound and a shillin' for. And puttin' the pound and the shillin' in his pocket, he started for Dublin next mornin' early, after Peggy, his wife, shook the holy water on him and bid God speed him. He didn't go far on the way—only somewhere this side of Barnesmore Gap—when a tall man, dressed all in grey frieze, with a high hat, cutaway coat, knee breeches, and brogues, and a staff in his hand, overtakes him.

"Ye look like a man would be goin' a journey?" says Denis a-Cuinn, says he, to the sthranger.

"It's what I'm doin'," says the sthranger; "I'm makin' for Dublin."

"Throth then, that's very lucky," says Denis, "for it's where meself's goin', too. I was never there afore, an' don't know the road."

"Well," says the sthranger, "I'm familiar with every foot o' the road; an' there isn't a turn or a twist in Dublin I don't know besides, nor a pavin' stone on the streets."

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"That's very lucky entirely," says Denis a-Cuinn.

So they thravelled on together. The Grey Man complained of the drooth, but he sayed he didn't like drinkin' from the streams by the roadside. "And don't mind, either, dhrinkin' from them," says Denis.

So the first public-house they come to Denis took him in and ordered two good glasses of whiskey for them both. When the Grey Man drunk his, he sayed: "That's good all through, and it's bad all through." Denis didn't say anything, but paid for the drinks and drunk his own. And right good whiskey it was, too.

But when they were on the road again, making good speed and chattin' as they went, says Denis, says he: "What did ye mean, when ye drunk the whiskey, by sayin' 'it was good all through, and it was bad all through'?"

And says the Grey Man: "It was very good, indeed, to be drinking that glass—but it was bad to be thinkin' that we couldn't have two more glasses—because I haven't wan penny in me company," says he.

"Oh," says Denis, "as for that, don't worry. I have a pound unbroken. We'll go into the very next public-house we meet, and have two more

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glasses. And afther that, as far as my money goes, ye won't want."

Accordingly, into the very next public-house they went, and Denis a-Cuinn changed his pound, and paid for two glasses out of it. And after that they took the road again, and thravelled on till they come to a farmer's house by the roadside, with a stack of turf built up against the gable, an' a sthream crossin' the road a bit beyont it. The Grey Man went up to the turf stack, and took two big black turf out of it; and when they passed on a bit, and crossed the sthream, he laid down the two turf on the road, and they changed into two black pigs. Poor Denis a-Cuinn blissed himself, for he was frightened to death, and he said: "God and the Bliss'd Virgin between me an' harm! You must be the divil himself."

"I'm not," says the Grey Man; "I'm as honest a man as yourself."

The two of them then walked on together, the Grey Man dhrivin' the pigs before him; and it wasn't long till they met three jobbers coming from a fair. "How much will ye take for the pigs?" says they. "I'll take five poun'," says the Grey Man. And the jobbers paid him down the money and took the pigs with them.

"Now," says the Grey Man, "we'll have money enough and to spare."

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“No,” says Denis a-Cuinn, “I wouldn’t touch your money. It isn’t honestly come by.”

“There you’re wrong,” says the other, “for them jobbers rogued our people out of a good deal more than five pound, the day at the fair.”

But, behold ye, when the jobbers had driven the pigs as far as the farm-house, and the stream crossin’ the road, doesn’t the two pigs, the minute they touched water, turn ins’antly into two black sods of turf, and float out of sight down the stream! And back the jobbers turned at full speed after the Grey Man. When they overtook the two thravellers they demanded their money back, and begun haulin’ and pullin’ and draggin’ the Grey Man, till doesn’t he fall stiff dead upon the road. And when the jobbers seen that, they turned and made off for their lives. And a crowd gathered about the dead man; and Denis a-Cuinn made off then, and thravelled on ahead. When he got safely three or four miles away, he went on his knees under a bush to thank God for gettin’ separated from such a man, who must surely be the Devil, when who should he see coming up till him but the Grey Man himself!

He told Denis that when the jobbers had gone, and most of the crowd scattered, too—for fear they would get mixed in the affair—he rose up, and the couple of old women that were round him

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fell over in a dead faint; and he hurried after Denis. There was nothing for it but for Denis to thravel on with him. So on they went, the Grey Man insistin' on payin' all expenses.

Next day, in the middle of the day, they were passin' through a wood. At a little house at the commencement of the wood, the Grey Man took up an old creel and carried it with him on his back, and when they were well in the heart of the wood, where there was a great lot of fairy-thimbles (fox-glove) growin', an' fir-cones lyin' on the ground, an' spider-webs on the branches of the trees, the Grey Man put down the creel and says he to Denis, "Help me fill me creel with all these things." An' the ins'ant they went into the creel, the fir-cones were changed into boots and shoes, and the fairy-thimbles into beautiful hats and caps, and the spider-webs into webs of fine silk!

Says Denis: "Ye surely must be the Divil out-an'-out."

"No," says the other, "I'm as honest a man as you."

Then he hoisted on his back the creelful, an' the two of them stepped out again. When they got clear of the wood they met a pedlar, and says the Grey Man to him: "Good morra, brother!"

"Good morra," says the pedlar; "how is trade?"

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"Very poor entirely," says the Grey Man. "If I got anywan to take this creelful off my hands, a bargain, I'd curse the trade an' quit it."

"How much are ye wantin' for it?" says the pedlar.

"Only five poun'," says the other. There an' then the pedlar paid him down the five poun', and got the creelful on his back, and went off with it. "We'll not want for money, now, anyhow," says the Grey Man to Denis.

"I wouldn't take or meddle with your money," says Denis, "for it isn't honestly come by."

"Isn't it?" says the other. "There you're wrong, for in wan week past that pedlar has cheated our poor people out of twicet that."

But, behold ye, the pedlar had gone on with his creel, till he came to a farm-house, an, goin' in, he asked them could he sell them anythin' that day.

"What have ye got?" says the *bean-a-tighe*.

"The best o' brogues," says the pedlar, "grand hats an' caps, and the finest of silk"—throwin' the creel on the floor.

But when they looked into it they all burst out laughin' at him—for there wasn't anythin' to be seen there but fir-cones, fairy-thimbles, and cob-webs!

Well, to make a long story short, the mad ped-

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lar set out after the Grey Man, and, overtakin' him, the very same thing happened that happened with him and the jobbers the day before. And when Denis a-Cuinn was on his knees, three or four miles ahead, thankin' God for his deliverance from the Divil's company, who came up to him but the Grey Man himself, and told Denis the same story over again.

Then Denis and him pushed ahead, and they came into Dublin the evenin' of the next day; and the Grey Man took care of Denis till he left him at his landlord's hall door. And there they separated.

When the landlord heard Denis's case through, he sat down and wrote a letter to the agent, forbiddin' him to put Denis out of his place, and gave the letter to Denis, and a pound-note moreover, to pay his way back again. Poor Denis thanked him from the bottom of his heart, and, when he left, went in search of lodgin's in the most backward and out-of-the-way lane he could find in the city. "For," says he to himself, "I don't want the Grey Man to find me till I get safe away from Dublin."

Denis got lodgin's in a very out-of-the-way place entirely, and, when he had his supper taken—and a hearty wan it was—and was in bed snug and warm, and huggin' himself into a good sleep,

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what does he hear but a knock at the outside door, and when it was opened who should he hear but the Grey Man steppin' in and askin' for lodgin'—which he got.

There was but wan bed for rent; so the Grey Man was put in along with Denis.

“Oh, is this yourself, me friend?” says the Grey Man—all as if he hadn't known Denis was there at all. “And how did ye come on with your landlord?” says he.

Denis told him all; and the Grey Man said he was glad of it.

In the mornin', when they got up, says the Grey Man: “I want ye to do me an oblidge?”

“What is it?” says Denis.

“I want ye,” says he, “to go to Dublin Bridge, where you'll see a man and a woman with a pile of earthenware crocks, sellin' them. If the man's in it, as well as the woman, you're to come back to me again, as ye went. But if there's only the woman, you're to buy a crock and she'll charge ye ninepence for it. Pay her a shillin' and, while she's gettin' the change, take this hemp knot,” says he, giving him about an inch or two of knotted hemp, “and drop it quietly into another of the crocks. Stand by, then, and see what'll happen.”

Denis said he would. He set out, and when he came to the bridge, right enough there was a pile

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of crocks there for sale; and, as luck would have it, the woman was only with herself with them. "How much for the crocks?" says Denis, says he, walkin' up.

"Ninepence," says the woman.

"I'll take wan," says Denis, says he, liftin' a crock and handin' her a shillin'.

And while she was fishin' up the change out of her petticoat pocket, doesn't Dennis quietly slip the piece of knotted hemp into another crock. When he got his change, he stood off a piece on the bridge, to watch. And he seen the knot of hemp had turned into a rat, and was leapin' from wan crock into another.

There was a crowd of idlers—as always there is—standin' upon the bridge, and "Look!" says wan o' them, "look at the rat!" liftin' a stone at the same time and lettin' bang at the rat, and breakin' a crock.

Every fellow of them then stooped for stones, and begun peltin' at the rat that skipped safe from wan crock, as soon as it was smashed, into another. And the rat jumped in and out through the crocks, and the fellows yelled, and pitched and smashed afore them, without heedin' the poor woman's cries and roars that owned the crockery—till, in five minutes' time, when her man come tearin' up, and got hold of the rat be the cuff

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of the neck, and threw him into the river, there wasn't a sound crock left out of all the pile but what was in smash and smithereens.

And the man and woman began to lament and, "There," says the man, says he—"there's me whole twenty-five pounds' worth of crocks gone to smash! But I know the meanin' of all this," says he to the woman—"the Boyo must be in Dublin. If I get me eye on him," says he, "it's me that will make him sup sorra with the spoon o' grief."

Denis, when he had seen and heard all this, set off for his lodgin's. There the lad was waitin', and axed what news. Denis told him from beginnin' to end what happened; and, when he heard it all, the Grey Man was right well plaised.

"I'm sorry for the poor man an' woman," says Denis, "that lost all their crockery-ware, and truble sorry that meself had anything to do with it."

"Then," says the Grey Man, "ye needn't be sorry, for that's the biggest vagabon' in all Dublin. Twelve months ago he took me into a public-house here to treat me; and what do you think did he do but change me into a goat with me horns out o' the windows, so that I couldn't move in or out, and kept me that way for three whole days, a speck-tackle for all Dublin! I swore I'd pay

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him for it; and now I have done it I'll go home happy. The sooner, too, I'm out o' Dublin the better for me; for he'll not leave a mousehole in the city he won't search to find me."

So the both of them started and hurried out of Dublin by a by-road, and, afore night, were well on their way back.

They thravelled on without adventures, the Grey Man payin' their way, till they come near Donegal town. "Now," says the Grey Man, "we'll have to separate here. But before we part, I'll give ye wan piece of advice. If ye ever meet a stranger again, and you goin' to journey with him, never show your money or tell that you have any. But," says he, "because by good luck you met a gentleman this time, and showed yourself such a generous fellow, and whole-hearted, tors't one ye thought penniless, ye'll be nothin' the poorer for it. Moreover," says he, "you've done me an obligation that I have waited long and thravelled far to find one who would do it. Accordingly," says he, "when ye reach home, go to the ruins of Micky the Miser's old house in the upper end of Altidoo, search well under the hearthstone, and see what you'll see."

The Grey Man then, biddin' Denis good-bye, went off in the Tyrone direction, and Denis thravelled on home. But he didn't lay his head on a

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pillow till he took a pick and spade and went off to Micky the Miser's old house, who had died without lavin' wan belongin' to him. And under the hearthstone, sure enough, he found a nest of goold guineas, the full of your two hands! "If ye were the Divil," says Denis, says he, "ye aren't half as bad as they give out on ye."

And from that day forward, as all the worl' knows, there was few more prosperous people or happier than Denis a-Cuinn, and all his family.

Though him, or his, or one in the country, never after seen or heerd tell of the Grey Man.

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IT was only when, on the seventh day out, you were awakened at four in the morning by furious commotion among your fellow second-cabiners, routed out of your berth, swirled up the gangway by a crazy mob, and, in the cold gray dawn, swept across the sloppy deck till, with glad eyes, you beheld for yourself the old Head of Kinsale shoving up the curtains of night with his shoulder, and heard Danny O'Flaherty, as if he were at a meeting of the Friendly Sons, in Fall River, reciting to the wide-eyed, tear-dimmed multitudes:

“Oh, *m'anam le Dhia*,* but there it is! the dawn on the Hills of Ireland!

God's angels liftin' the night's black veil from the fair, sweet face of my Sireland!

Och Ireland, isn't it grand you look, like a bride in her rich adornin'!

With all the pent-up love o' my soul, I bid you the top o' the mornin'!”

that you realized you were really and truly that wonderful being on whom, in your earlier days,

*My Soul to God.

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you used to gaze from afar with awe and admiration—a Come-Home Yankee!

And what a cheer you all raised at sight of the jaunting car at the Customs' House gable! And what a long, loud and ringing chorus of hearty laughter when you saw the ass-and-cart driven by a lad of fifty (whose legs dangled to the ground) come tearing down the wharf.

"Boys," said Larry Sullivan, "if you saw that sight on Fif' Avenoo!" And then again you all laughed long and loud at the real wit of the idea.

"Or on Jackson Boulevard!" said Chicago Pat, causing another outburst.

"Or at Golden Gate Park, by crickey!" said Tim O'Donnell, evoking a laugh not less hearty.

All wit tokens were generously accepted that morning without any boor's pausing to ring them on the counter. And the dullest among you were passing counterfeits in bushels, and swelled to bursting with the returns.

The jaunting car and ass-and-cart were glimpses into a far-gone era, an antediluvian world—a world that you, wet-eyed, left behind five years and seven months before, while yet you were poor and untravelled and had hardly learned to look at a wonder with your mouth closed.

That was a lee-and-long time ago, indeed! And you shook your head sympathetically at the vision

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of the poor shy boy in homespuns and lob-sided cap and hesitating speech, who, in that remote era, masqueraded as you, Dan Mulhearn—you with your independent air and your Nassau Street suit and your ten hundred and fifty-six dollar draft on the Derry and North-Western Bank in your breast-pocket! You, who now knew Brooklyn from the Fulton Ferry to Jamaica and from Flatbush to the confines of Greenpoint; who had learned to cross the Brooklyn Bridge without trembling; had seen the Singer Building; had gone twice through the World's Renowned Waxworks on Twenty-third Street; had marched up Fifth Avenue in a Patrick's Day procession, and even seen Boss Croker himself pass in his automobile one day!

Yes, as you hurried northward on your train, you sat back with folded arms in the corner of your carriage and thought of that poor *You* of the dark ages and smiled again—quite sympathetically, however. But the boys and girls, your comrades, did not leave you long to your reflections. At every station you had to jam your head out of the same window with thirteen others, help the girls chaff the shy stay-at-home boys who had come down to see the train pass, and help the boys to badger the haughty railway aristocrats—much to the deep alarm and trepidation of the gaping stay-at-homes, who had never before seen

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anarchists in real life. And when Johnny Moroney, who was going to Galway, made inquiry of the gold-braided duke who governed Limerick Junction: "Say, boss, what kind of gold-dinged one-horse shay is this rickety-rackety, dead-march-in-Solomon box of tricks anyhow?" that bloated aristocrat utterly failed to find utterance for his outraged feelings, but blossomed in the face, and bloated more and more, till it became a toss-up whether he or your laughter-shaken companions should have the first apoplectic fit.

These people deserved a shaking-up anyhow, for the train that carried you North was a slow old cart, sure—at best, going not more than forty miles an hour—and you didn't know how you had put up with it at all, at all, before you left Ireland long ago. Though, of course (you then recollected), you had travelled by train only three times in that far-away former life of yours, and those times, ha! ha! you were saying your prayers all the way! Well! Well! Well! Wonders will never cease!

As yourself, Yankee Dan Mulhearn, with your sister-Yankee, Susie Covenay, and your two big American trunks, found yourself on Charlie Kardy's jaunting car driving home to Knockagar from the Donegal station, and saw each old familiar hill and burn and bush arise before your

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eyes, a something strange began stirring in your breast that you'd often found struggling and kicking there when you were stoking your engine in the Fulton Street power-house or stretching to sleep in your lonely little room on Underhill Avenue. Even amid the roar of revelry on Coney Island these same pictures had, unbidden, arisen before your mental eye.

When, after a while, people in the houses and on the hillsides, noticing the Amerikay trunks, came running out and rushing down to put *Cead' Mile Fáilte* before the Come-Home Yankees—whoever they might be—it dawned on you that, after all, though Ireland was antediluvian and slow and funny, it held a something-or-other that did a man's soul good—a something which the galloping greater world had long ago bumped out of its cart and which you now acknowledged was worth a world in itself. Teague Kennedy, setting potatoes half a mile up the hill, stuck his spade in a ridge and shouted to his neighbours across the march-ditch to run, for there was Charlie Kardy driving two Come-Home Yankees from the station! And he ran, and his neighbours beyond the march-ditch ran, as if they'd break their necks, all to intercept you and put welcome before you.

And Denis, the tailor, leaping from his table

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when he got a glimpse of the car rounding the bend of the road, ran out in his stocking soles, followed by Nelly and the children, everyone; and Toal a-Gallagher, the cobbler, forgetting the angry customers who were storming at him, the arch-procrastinator, threw from him his last and brogue, and, tucking back his apron, ran a race with customers who had forgotten their wrath, the yellow dog at their heels trying to drown their chorused welcomes by its three-ha'penny bark. You took their demonstrations with the smiling calm becoming to a great man and a travelled, and you recognized every individual of them, of course—after the proper few moments' hesitation.

"Why, if this isn't Toal a-Gallagher!" Toal straightens himself for pride that a Yankee remembers him. "And I guess this is your wife, Susie?" Adding, to Toal, "Susie, we used to call her, before I left home."

"Susie herself it is then, sure enough," Manus replied for his overcome better-half. "What an ojjious great mimory ye have entirely, Dan."

"Oh! you bet. And if I don't mistake me, this person I calculate is Denis Connolly, who used to spoil my clothes long ago."

"God bliss ye, it's what's left o' him," Denis replies for himself, and wrings your hand with both of his. "An' it's right hearty welcome ye

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are back again to ould Ireland! And it's hale and hearty ye are lookin', God bliss ye, over again! And I'm sure a mortal sight of money ye have in that terrible big trunk of yours—may the Heavens increase it to ye!"

But your poor mother's joy at your unanticipated arrival was almost too much for her. And your father was so past himself with delight that he could only smile idiotically, mutter the most ludicrous commonplaces, go trotting around the house lifting everything out of its right place and setting it down in its wrong place, under pretense to himself that he was tidying up in honour of the Come-Home Yankee.

And you hadn't your coat off till the house was crammed with breathless ones who ran hither from all points of the compass when the news—even, it seemed, before you had arrived—went on the wind's wings that Yankee Dan Mulhearn was home from Amerikay—and your poor confused father was intercepting the welcomes under the temporary delusion that it was he who was the returned Yankee.

And when Long John Meehan reminded him that he was only a stick-in-the-mud who had never hardly been out of sight of his own dunghill, he ran to your mother and nearly wrung the arm off her, welcoming her home. And your poor

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mother, as confused as your father, thought for a moment that the big Amerikay trunk in the middle of the floor, which everybody was fingering and admiring, must be hers. But when calm reason resumed its throne in the brains of both, they united in admiring the fine, brave-looking boy you were, entirely—and praising the grand turn-out, God bless you, you had made—"though, to be sure, it ought to be in you anyhow, from both sides o' the house"—and then they nodded wisely to each other.

Your mother carried around your black overcoat with the "near-fur" collar for everyone to see and feel and test and admire. And your father made you walk up the floor and down, till the neighbours could see the strong, fine, manly shape you'd got to be, and carrying your head like the King of Ireland! And the magnificent Yankee suit of clothes you'd on—particular attention to which he bespoke from Denis, the tailor, who, observing it with critical look which would do credit to Fifth Avenue's greatest clothes-artist, agreed that it was dandy indeed—barrin' a defect in the stomach, a want of proper hang about the trousers, a somethin'-or-other a little awk'ard about the waist, and just-what-you'd-know too much of a fullness in the collar. And the neighbours in chorus agreed that it was a beautiful suit

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of clothes, beautiful entirely, and a credit to American tailors—but that, to be sure, one couldn't expect to find Denis Connollys everywhere.

When your poor mother led the Rosary that night there was a tremble in her voice, but you're sure the Angel never marked it against her; and when she came to the trimmings, and, through force of habit, had begun unthinkingly to call for the usual "Pater-and-Ave for our poor son Dan wandherin' in the Lan' o' the Sthranger," she suddenly remembered and broke down entirely—and your father raised a whillalew!—and—and—well—ye were a fool yourself as well as any of them.

All that night and the next day, and the night after, your father's house was like a cow-market. To mention that there was no sleep in it would be painting the primrose. The whole townland of Knockagar, with numbers of contiguous townlands, slept not. No door was closed for three days and three nights. The neighbours' feet rested never, their tongues seldom. The whole world held jubilee, because the Yankee was come home.

All the more joyful was that jubilee, since you had with you—for they all made it their business to know this—a draft for a thousand and fifty-six dollars on the Derry and North Western Bank. More than two hundred and sixteen pounds! A fabulous sum that set people's fancies busy wonder-

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ing how you ever got it anyhow, and planning whatever under the sun you could with it all, at all! Oh! what estates they could buy, what castles they could build, what new worlds they could create, if Heaven had only put such unimaginable wealth their way!

Not that they envied you your good fortune. Far from it. In the depths of their deep hearts they wished, if such were possible—and if you could hear it without your reason getting unsettled—that the good Lord had doubled your enormous wealth to you. “Sure, God bliss him! and bliss the poor old father and mother that he has made proud and happy and independint for the remainder of their days—sure, it’s desarvin’ of it all he is!” So they with fervent sincerity said. And they made your heart very happy, forgetting for the moment that you were a cold Yankee—and you wished in your soul they were, everyone of them, millionaires like yourself.

At least a dozen women sat around while you unpacked your trunk—not merely those who knew that you bore them presents from their daughters in Brooklyn and Jersey and Philadelphia, but likewise those few poor ones who had been in attendance at the coming home of every Yankee for the past fifteen years, gambling with the hope that

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their daughters, from whom alas! they had never heard, might at last have remembered them.

And there were women who had no daughters abroad and could expect nothing, but who, in their woman's way, thirsted to see the wonders. And every dress and pair of boots and bonnet and book and bit of finery, handed out to one or other overjoyed recipient, was accorded a clasping of hands and a turning-up of eyes. Wondered at and enthused over, it was handled and tested, viewed before the light and against the light, pronounced perfect, and: "Well, just like what you'd expect out of Amerikay." And the lucky one was overpowered with expressions of envy.

America, its wonder, its greatness, its grandeur, its unimaginable wealth, was the topic of conversation nightly at every fireside, at every wake, on the way to Mass. With the groups that stood in the chapel-yard, you were the observed of all observers—you and Yankee Susie Covenay. It made you feel still prouder and walk still straighter and throw your head still further back when, on passing every group, you heard them whisper: "There goes Yankee Mulhearn!" In fact, you had never quite realized till now how wonderful and great and grand and wealthy America was, and how mighty proud every Yankee like yourself should be.

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The boys all envied you. There was sorrow a doubt of it—glory be to goodness! The girls all admired you—still less doubt was there (in your mind) of this. When with your own grand air, but also your own graciousness, you addressed these, they blushed becomingly and cast down eyes that they had little need to be ashamed of, and spoke very soft and low in reply. And if you suddenly turned when you had passed the shawled group of them, you surprised them in the guilty act of casting after you glances of unrestrained admiration. At the dance and at the wedding and at the fair, the stay-at-home boys, knowing their place and their worth, backed away from the girls and left you a free field, and every girl of them found her innocent heart beat with joy when you claimed a walk or a dance with her.

Yes, where all the girls gave you admiration all the boys gave you reverence—except, of course, the Satirist. And, sure, every countryside had its Satirist. He was the one thorn in the Yankee's bed of roses. Nothing dazzled, let alone dumbfounded, him. The flower of reverence could never be coaxed from the arid soil of that soulless one. By one little word, or one little dry remark uttered in a cruelly casual way, from his own remote corner of the dance house, this rascally fellow hurt Yankee feelings considerably. And were not you

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a person of extraordinarily great faith, he might have undermined your confidence that a Come-Home Yankee was the greatest, the most dazzling, thing the world ever knew.

But your great faith was at length justified; for when, on the third Sunday after you had come home, you marched down the chapel-yard, not merely linking Cassie McGarry and helping her pick her steps through the dirt, but, to crown your audacity, holding her own umbrella over her head, not only were the weak-kneed, whose faith had been shaken by the Satirist, strengthened, but the Satirist himself was in sight of all dumbfounded. And, his villainous presence of mind forsaking him, he was heard to exclaim despairfully, after his speech returned: "Well, Amerikay is the divil, and Yankees bate the divil out an' out!"

Yes, Dan, your name was *AUDACITY* with every letter in it a capital—and the same was the name of every mother's son of your brother Yankees-Come-Home! As cool as a trout in a pool, the astounded boys saw you step up to the Masther in the fair, Masther Gallagher of the Gortmore school, and shake his hand with an ease and familiarity that took away their breath and—ask him to have a drink with you! The thunder-struck ones were hardly surprised—nothing would surprise them after—when the Masther not only

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smiled on the *lèse-majesté*, but actually complied!

In that Fair of Glenties the second week after the raft of you Yankees came home, sure you were every man of you kings. And every Yankee girl a queen. Not merely were you the cynosure of all wondering, envying, admiring eyes, but you were the suns round which the Fair rotated. Rather, maybe, you were Jupiters—everyone of you with his little group of satellites revolving round him and turning on your own orbits at the same time. And the gold you threw about! flung abroad like dirt in fistfuls! treated 'with contempt! till the boys really did believe that you Yankees tramped the glittering thing underfoot on the streets of Philadelphia and Brooklyn! It's a certainty that fifteen shillings didn't excuse you that reckless day.

And when Yankee brother met Yankee sister in the Fair of Glenties, Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, had they come, would have sulked unminded in a corner. And when Yankee brother met Yankee brother and spoke offhandedly of Myrtle Avenue and Prospect Park and Coney, you owned the world! Or it was like the conjunction of the suns of two systems. And you didn't seem to mind your greatness at all, at all. You were light-hearted, light-minded, debonair as people on whose shoulders lay no load that would

YOU WERE THE CYNOSURE OF ALL ADMIRING EYES



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sink the Jap navy. Therein, in fact, your dazzling greatness lay. In the Fair that day were scores of poor boys from the mountains in caps and flannel jackets that their mothers had made, who would have pawned anything but their souls to be one of you. And the Yankees at the Fair were the one topic of conversation in the mountain valleys for a month after.

It is true that the soulless satirist of the mountain valley guessed that surely one must have to look at the President of the United States himself through a smoked glass. But the profane fellow was met by a nipping frost which stimulated him to put his pipe in his pocket and go to his neglected home.

Even when the great throng of your reception was over, your home was no night devoid of visitors. Through six and seven and ten and twelve miles of bog and mountain, in rain, hail or sun, poor men and women trudged to inquire with tears in their eyes whether you saw their little Johnny, who was in Galveston, and Annie in Portland, Maine, and La'rence, in Keokuk, and Neil, who, the last news was from him, was Lord Mayor of Rahway, New Jersey. There was a feeling of disappointment and surprise if you had neither met nor heard of Mrs. Carney's little Peter, who lived at 57½ Stave Street, Chicago,

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and was boss over a street squad—because, “God bliss ye, there isn’t a chile in Jee-cago town but knows Pether, I’m towld.” Your sojourn in America hasn’t profited you as much as Mrs. Carney expected.

Nevertheless, you had yet seen scores and scores of their boys and girls. And, to the comforting of their fathers and mothers, they learn that they are, every soul of them, doing well and a credit to those who reared them and the country they came from.

And it was indeed a true pleasure to you, though you do not know Mrs. Carney’s Peter even by repute, to be able to tell Mrs. O’Lynn that her son Andy, who picked up his only little learning at the Drimore night school during parts of two hard winters, is now earning five thousand dollars a year and bidding fair soon to be the biggest man in the biggest dry-goods concern in Philadelphia. And to tell Red Nahor MacHugh of the Bog that his boy, Patrick, who was the swiftest shearer of corn that the Parish of Inver ever knew, was made Appellate Judge in Boston the Wednesday before you sailed. And to tell Maurice Managhan that Michael, his boy, is the whole Law and the Prophets to the Brooklyn Ninth Ward.

An easy and pleasant task it was to you to tell

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Sheila McGrady all about her little Norah, whom her employer on Long Island wouldn't part with for gold—Norah, who is a model to the American girls, and who, by work of her little hands in American kitchens, had paid all the rent and lifted the cart load of debt off her father's farm, built her father and mother a new house, stored and stocked it warmly within and without, and had her parents go the best-dressed, warmest-clad, lightest-hearted pair that walked to Frosses chapel on a Sunday.

Yet, to be sure, it was hard and very hard on you when the Widow Conaghan, unexpectedly dropping in, besought you to tell her how the child of her heart, Corney, was making out in the States, and that you, taken off your guard, had to hem and haw and spar for wind, till you found words to inform her that, "Oh, yes, yes, Corney? To be sure, Corney—yes—Corney. Oh, Corney! He's making out bravely, I guess. Yes, Corney, he's—you see, Mrs. Conaghan, the times in America aren't what they used to be—that is, for a little while—they're going to pick up again immediately, though—and Corney, meanwhile, is doing as well as can be expected, all things considered—Corney, the reason you didn't hear from him, of course—he was just out of a job for a little while and was lazy to write, till he'd have more

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cheery news—but—but—there's no telling how soon a job will turn up—maybe, please God, he has one now—and you'll—maybe—get a good letter from Corney very soon."

For a Yankee so audacious as you, it was a poor blundering effort, and you despised yourself as you tried to swallow your spittle at the conclusion, even though the pathetic eyes of the neighbours who sat around the wall looked pride on you for what they thought was a situation well saved. And as you looked into the beautiful, patient, sweet, deep-lined face of the Widow Conaghan, framed in its white cap, you cursed the wastrel Corney in your heart. And you had to lie like the Father of Lies again when old Manny McGragh came in from Edrigol Mountain to ask how was his poor boy Francis doin'—and what was the *raison* he wouldn't write his poor oul' father. Francis had been killed by a trolley car six years before, and the black tidings had been hidden from his father ever since. 'The Come-Home Yankee's bed wasn't all of roses.

Tea parties *go leor* from the top to the bottom of the parish you were, of course, invited to. Tea parties especially in your honour, or in honour of all the Yankees. Tea parties to the decking of which came, in rushing streams, tributary loans—spoons and forks and knives and linens and china—

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the pick of the parish. Tea parties where you were treated not merely to cappered oat bread, but white bread from the town also, and currant bread, and bread with raisins in it. Tea parties where Nabla MacMullan made her husband Teddy (nick-named "The Rooshian," because of his roughness) reverse the usual order of things with him and sit down to table with his hat off and his coat on, letting the saucer go to waste, too, while he drank his tea from the cup—and that, too, without daring to blow into it—unless, of course, on occasion when he saw Nabla's attention otherwise absorbingly occupied.

You brought, of course, your choicest Yankee accent to these parties. To be sure, it is not suggested that your Yankee accent was not at all times choice, for, indeed, it ever fascinated all hearers. But there are degrees even in perfection, and you talked Pennsylvanian which you had acquired from a seamstress on Underhill and Park at tea parties for the delectation of the company. And you talked the wonders of America, too.

When you told how American trains went so swiftly as to make the mile-stones like paling posts, Teddy MacMullan, opening both mouth and eyes, absorbed it fascinatedly. Yet, when you said there were houses in New York twenty-three stories high, "more than your house, Teddy, which

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is seven feet to the eave, piled twenty-three times on top of itself," Teddy closed his mouth firmly and looked at you out of very narrow eyes indeed. And when you capped the climax by saying that the Dutchmen could speak to each other in Dutch *and understand!* Teddy, utterly ignoring the rain of deadly daggers that Nabla's eyes were hurling at him, clapped his hat hard down upon his head, gave a savage grunt and took his departure—mad, of course, but yet with morals unsmirched!

To the credulous ones who remained at the Arabian Nights Entertainment, you told of bridges above the tops of the houses, trains flying over your head as you walked the streets, horses and wagons and their loads, and carriages and cars, driving right straight into a boat and being boated across rivers, and railroads not only under the foundations of houses, but under the beds of rivers also! Jimminy Heggarty from the Long Bog gave vent to the suppressed feelings of the tea party when he said: "Thank God, childer, that we have Irelan' to live in!"—"And," said Black Patrick Carney, "that we're allowed to die natural daiths."

Which latter remarks suggested to you, who knew how, here, the news of a child's death was immediately flashed over twelve miles square, drawing to wake and funeral representatives from

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all families, that you tell them of hearses driving up to houses in the same street with you—once actually to the house next door—and taking away one, whose death, let alone whose life, though you lived in that street for three years, you had never heard of! And you recollect how a thick silence, which one might have turned with a plough, thereupon fell on the company, and Black Patrick, to save your feelings, asked Mrs. Nabla to please give him a cup o' tay strong enough for a duck to walk on, adroitly turned the conversation to politics, and, marvelling that a human was permitted to shake hands with the President, inquired: "What's the raison, anyhow, your Prisent o' the United States doesn't order the London Parlymint to free Ireland?"

You may as well confess that when you came home you had, in the back of your head, the idea that you might settle down with yellow-haired Bridie Brennan and be happy ever after, like they are in the stories. But, to the dashing of your Yankee audacity, you found that Bridie preferred Taigue Dornan, who had never travelled farther than to Donegal in his life—except once when he went to Ballyshamy, eleven miles beyond, with a load of plenishing for Minister Stewart. And the little shock steadied you.

You re-roofed your father's house while you

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were at home and put slates on it instead of straw, and limed it and added a new room. And you put extra stock on his land and employed men to drain it and bought fresh seed and artificial manure for it, and put up a new hay-barn and a pump, till people, in despair, stopped straining their imaginations in vain conjecture what was the next thing the Yankee would take it into his head to do, anyhow.

You paid off all the debt, of course. And you laid in a fine supply of meal and flour and flitches of bacon. And you had a carpenter for three weeks making chairs and tables and doors and putting up a ceiling. And you gave a tidy little sum, indeed, to your father and mother and put a nice penny in the bank. And you then said in God's name you'd face the water again and wouldn't think of settling down till you'd come back in five years more with your little pile increased. Your father and mother were both silent when they heard this; but they didn't like to gain-say you, so you took your passage to sail from Derry on Friday-come-eight-days. And then you began at leisure to travel all the countryside, saying good-bye again, just as you did at the first going-off long ago, to every man, woman and child, from the top to the bottom of the parish. And of the band of seven of you that had come.

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home, you found that three were going back. Susie Covenay and another of them had married and found happiness and content and never wanted to leave Ireland more. Two of them hadn't married, but hoped to, and had their eye upon likely mates—and had opened country shops meanwhile.

There was a convoy, of course. The three of you, for the convenience of your mutual friends, who otherwise would have found it too strenuous to enjoy three convoys in the one night, blended your convoys into one, which was held in Long John McGinty's big barn. There was eating and dancing and revelry *go leor*—the very best way to beguile sad hearts at parting—to lift your mind off your going and your father's and mother's and friends' minds also.

But that heartrending cry of your mother's that you stuffed your two ears against, when in the cold, gray dawn you hurried up the hill on your way to Derry, still rings in your ears, as you now rush your car down Vanderbilt Avenue, and crash with it through Fulton Street, or sweep with it like a bird over the Bridge—rings in your ears and calls in your heart, and gives you peace, nor night nor day, till you make up your mind (as fast you are doing) once more, and soon, to be again, and evermore to remain, till the Day of the Dark Harvester, a Come-Home Yankee!

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THERE are more neighbours at Knockagar than are on the priest's books. On the green hillsides of Ireland, as yourself knows well, and you surely ought to know, there's hardly a foot of ground without its fairy. In your grandfather's time, to be sure, there were five against the one that now is.

But, alas! like the strapping boys and sweet *cailini* of the Emerald Isle, the fairies, too, are fast becoming fewer. At least they show themselves less—to punish a generation that knows too much. Your grandfather, and even your father before you, could scarcely walk out of a Summer evening or by a harvest moonlight without meeting troops of them. Now you might ride a race-horse from candle-light to cock-crow and count yourself lucky if you met one. As often as not, you'd meet maybe none at all, at all. Yourself and your age hardly merit such honour. But even the one or two or the few you might be so fortunate as to find are far from being as frolicsome, and are not a hundredth as good-hearted as the fairies with whom your grandfather was familiar. Your grandfather's fellows, however, whom he

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left behind (and who are coming to the conclusion that Death is absent-minded), can yet see more in a mile's walk than could you if you searched for a month. And your grandfather's survivors when they meet at a wake, and for the thousand and first time conclusively prove that the world is retrograding, consent that even the fairies, who always were the friends of man, are on the edge of giving up for hopeless a world that's become unworthy, and a people more unworthy still. And, as you listen, you and your comrades, who had good conceit of yourselves, feel yourselves grow small enough to crawl through keyholes.

It is only by comparison with more favoured times, however, that you can call the fairies now few. You very well know that their numbers are far from what they used to be, when, as old Conal MacCallig informed you, they hung in the air as thick as haws on the thorn-bush—not visible, though, except to a rare and favoured few. But from your own knowledge, and the knowledge of hundreds whom you know well among the hills, they are far from few in Ireland yet. To be sure, they are much more seldom seen; and Conal MacCallig assures you that is the punishment and loss of people of little faith. Conal—and he ought to know, for there wasn't in his day a man more

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knowledgable in fairy-lore—informs you that there are still enough fairies in the Emerald Isle to colonize the world. And you are very certain of it. You are in the faithless generation, but, thank Heaven, not of it.

To conclude that the fairies are dying like Hughie Haughie—who thought he owned the world's wisdom because he read the *Dublin Weekly News*—is too absurd entirely for anyone but him who has his head turned reading the papers. The fairies can no more die, even if they wished it, than can the devil himself—or the angels. Because, like both of them, they are spirits from Heaven, where they were all fellows at first. The time when you were sixteen and gave a day's shearing of corn to Eamonn Mac-Daid of the Long Brae, you got many a fascinating fairy-tale from him that carried you from end to end of the corn-hint without knowing that you and your hook had been going at a gallop, and that Eamonn was getting double day's work out of you. (The same Eamonn was a clever rogue!) But there wasn't any of all Eamonn's stories half so wonderful as that of the way the fairies first came.

When the great battle was in Heaven—when Lucifer, in his pride wanting to have equal say with God in all things, arose in rebellion because

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God wouldn't give him his way, and the Archangel Michael took up the cudgels for God—the angels divided themselves into three parts, one wing of them fighting with Lucifer, and one with Michael, and the third remaining without prejudice till they'd see how the war went, taking neither side at all. Michael, behold you, when he won out and overcome Lucifer and his rebels and cast them into Hell, turned his attention to them that hadn't chosen to be either fish, flesh, or good red-herring. "By reason you didn't actually raise hands against God," Michael announced, "you don't deserve Hell with the clan-jaffry I've sent there. But because you didn't do your duty and stand for God when His will was rebelled against, neither should you have Heaven. So," he says, "from Heaven you must begone!" And they were downcast at the sore sentence given them.

"And where is it you'll exile us to?" says they.

"In pity for you," says Michael, who, like all Irishmen, had a kindly spot in his heart, "I'll let you make choice of all places in the world, outside Heaven and Hell."

"Then," says they with one voice, without pause or hesitation, "if we must lose Heaven, we want to go to the delightfulest place in all the world, and the place that is nearest to Heaven. Send us to Ireland."

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'Tis no wonder then that you and all your people are gentle and kindly with them ever. Sure you couldn't be otherwise, and be human—considering all that's been lost to these unfortunates. And you and all your people never would, and never will, do anything to harm or hamper the little exiles from Heaven who honoured Erin's Isle by choosing to abide in its raths and on its green hillsides, on its heathery moors and in its bosky dells and wooded glens, which should always remind them of the Heavenly home they long ago lost. You and your people wouldn't even hurt their feelings by calling them Fairies—a name they naturally don't like—whenever they are likely to be within hearing. "The Gentle People," you thoughtfully call them.

And they pay you back in kind. For they are gentle and genial with you. Only tricksome at their worst—for, when they left Heaven, they didn't leave love of fun behind. And many's the pardonable prank the creatures have played, and many's the lightsome frolic they have had, at many a man's expense whom you yourself knew. Robin Porter of Edrim Glibe, you well remember their carrying off with them around the world on a May evening, when you were still a youngster. There wasn't any doubt about Robin's strange adventure, because, as often as there are fingers and

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toes on you, you listened to the story from his own lips. And Robin died less than a dozen years ago.

Robin that evening was returning from the Fair of Donegal with five pounds in his pocket, the price of a heifer he'd sold. And when he reached the bottom of the lane, nigh to the Fairy Knowe that you know well, just a gun-shot below his own house on the hillside, he was startled to see the size of a funeral of little people running hither and thither in the Rowan Park, every one of them crying out: "Fetch me a horse!", and getting it as fast as it was ordered! Robin, saying to himself: "Faith, a horse would be a handy thing for meself," shouted: "Fetch me a horse, too!" And the next minute he was mounted on the dashingest steed between here and there. And when every one of his little comrades, putting on a red cap that hung on the horn of the saddle, cried out: "I wisht I was in Paris!" Robin, throwing off his own old caubeen, clapped the red cap on his head, and cried: "I wisht I was in Paris, too!" Whiff! and away with himself through the skies at a hundred mile a minute he found himself flying. And in less time than it would take you to cross the Bridge of Brackey, Robin, with his companions, found himself alighting in Paris, the most dazzlin' city, he said, he'd ever seen or heard tell

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of. They walked the streets and viewed all its beautiful castles (for in Paris, of course, no one lives in anything less or lower than a castle), and marvelled at all its wonders. And when they'd dined and wined to their heart's content at a castle that must have been the King's—so grand was it, with the very mortar on the walls a mixture of gold and silver—every man mounted his steed and clapped on his cap and cried out: "I wisht I was in Jee-cago!" And Robin clapped on his cap, too, and cried out: "I wisht I was in Jee-cago!" And, puff! and away with them through the skies, over lands and over seas, till, behold you, in less time than I tell it, they were planked on the streets of a city more wonderful far than Paris was—a city whose houses went story after story all the way to Heaven and with trains going helter-skelter, running and rattling in the air above your head (God save us, and bless us!)—and the President of America himself and Con MacGuire's son of Meen-a-hurn, and several others from home, walking the streets plain to be seen. And the President gave Robin a hearty hand-shake, and bade him a good Irish *Cead mile fáilte** to his country, and chided him for not coming oftener, and asked him how was Lanty MacCann getting on, who had gone home five years

*Hundred thousand welcomes.

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before with a power of Yankee money and bought a farm in Farramore. And he said to tell Lanty America missed him. And altogether Robin was mightily taken with the American President, who was as plain a man and as easy spoken to as Billy the Beggar. And when the fairies had transacted the business that took them to Chicago, and Robin had seen enough of that extraordinary city to make him shy of America all his life after, each man mounted his steed and clapped on his cap and cried out: "I wisht I was in Rome!" And Robin, too, clapped on his cap and said: "I wisht I was in Rome!" and five minutes more found them standing on the streets of Rome, nigh blinded by the splendour of the Pope's palace. The sight of it reminded Robin how he'd oftentimes heard Father Peter, his loved old *sagart* at home, bewailing that his one comfort in the world, the pipe, was denied him by the bishop's orders not to smoke in public. So, giving his horse to one of his comrades to hold, my brave Robin marched right up and knocked on the door, asked to see His Holiness, and introduced himself, requesting the Holy Father as a favour to dispense Father Peter in regard to the pipe. And the Pope replied: "Well, my poor fellow, if you've travelled all the way from Donegal to put up this petition, it would ill become me to send you back broken-

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hearted or empty-handed. Tell Father Peter from me," says he, "that from this time out he has my permission to snap his fingers at bishops and smoke when he pleases. For, more by the same token," says he, "'tis a decent man is that same Father Peter. And 'tis many's the good account I've heard of him—a friend to the poor and a father to his flock, and says the Prayers before Mass without skippin'. Take this pouch and this pipe to him," says he, "they'll be his right and title for disregarding the bishop's orders. May the one never go out and the other never get empty. And my blessing go with them, to both him and you." And, pocketing pouch and pipe, a pleased man and proud was Robin, as he left the Pope's palace. His friends were all waiting for him without, and every man now mounted his horse and clapped on his cap and cried out: "I wisht I was home in Edrim Glibe again!" And, piff! off through the air with them, steed and man at the rate of a wedding, and never stopped or stayed till they were in Edrim Glibe again. And sure enough all the world knows that the break o' day on May morning Thomas Managhan of the Alt and Larry Friel of the Shore, getting home from the wake of Neill Durneen, found Robin astride the cross-sticks which answer for a gate at the entrance to his own lane, and just within a hen's race of the

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Fairy Knowe. Robin's old hat, they can swear, was lying on the ground, the same place he had cast it the night before, when he took the red cap in its stead. The cap, to be sure, had disappeared. And the pipe and the pouch, alas! he'd lost upon the jaunt. The fairies, the rogues, had plainly picked his pocket before they parted with him, for they very well suspected that the Pope kept a piece of good tobacco, and his judgment in pipes wasn't to be scorned neither. Robin was mortal sorry for Father Peter's sake; and it's a well-known fact in proof, that till the day of his death, the good man, wanting the tokens for defying the bishop's orders, was never seen to smoke a pipe in public.

That might have been a prank they played upon Robin; but a sadder deed was what they did to little Rosie Devlin, whom they coveted for her loveliness. And it is often and often yourself and many another child of the hills cried at hearing Rosie's story told the thousandth time.

Rosie was just a child of ten and pretty as a primrose. Her people used to send her to the hill every morning to herd sheep. Two or three times she came home, her eyes as big as apples, telling them of the lovely children like herself whom she had met upon the hill, and played and danced and sung with. Her people only laughed

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at the foolish child, whose head, they said, was full of foolish fancies. But one evening she came home crying, and told that the lovely children who played with her now said they'd made up their minds to keep her altogether next time she came on the hill. And her people just said, angrily: "Hold your babbling tongue and give us no more such silly stories." But she cried when they ordered her to the hill next morning, and clasping her mother, and then her father, about the knees, besought them, "Oh, mammy! Oh, daddy! don't send me to the hill or I'll never see you more." And they, right angry with her now, took a rod and, scudding her little bare legs, drove her out. Many people that morning met Rosie bitterly crying and looking longingly back every few minutes as she went up the hill; but no one ever met her coming down. For she never returned. Nor was trace or track of her found. But every little boy and girl among the hills cries for her still.

But, barring harmless little jokes like that they had with Robin, and a rare coveting and carrying away a lovely mortal child to make her Queen among the fairies, the Gentle Folk, you well know, are genial and kindly and have been helpful to you and yours and the neighbours a hundred thousand times. They have double reason, too, for helping man. Not only are they kind and kindly

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by their angel nature, but they know it is their interest to keep you on their side, and encourage your interceding with God for them. For they think, with you, that through your prayers and the prayers of all the mortal neighbours, God's heart will melt to them, and on the Long Day, when He comes to judge the world, He'll maybe agree that they have been enough punished by their long, long exile from the glorious land that was theirs, and take them back with Him again to Heaven.

You remember how, as you sat with your bare toes in the ashes of a hundred chimney corners of the mountain side, you heard ten thousand times old Father Phil's reply to the fairies on this point. Of course, Father Phil lived far before your day, but the old men and women who told the story knew him well, and loved him much. In thousands beyond count, the Little People once met up with him at midnight on a lonely mountain road, one beautiful, bright November night when the good man was returning from giving the last rites to one of the MacClune's of Croaghan, who, at the age of a hundred, had taken it into his head to die. Father Phil, on his old gray mare, was riding home along the white mountain road, and saying his Rosary as he rode—for it had been a busy day with him, between welcoming people

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into the world and helping them out of it. And when he found the old mare suddenly stop with a jerk, he lifted his head and, lo and behold you! away before him on the moonlit road as far as eye could carry, were thousands and thousands of little people mounted on horseback. And, when the old man got his speeches, he asked them in God's name who they were and what was a-trouble to them, for he well knew they weren't of this earth. A spokesman, stepping out from the front rank, said: "Good Priest, we are the Gentle People, this night gathered in our thousands of thousands from all ends of Ireland to put to you one question."

"And what is the question?" asked Father Phil.

"We want to know from you," said the spokesman, "finally, once and for all, whether there is ever any hope of our redemption."

Father Phil, when he heard this, waved his hand, saying with a tremble in his voice: "Go away, good people, and do not ask me any question."

And that instant up from all the ranks of all the thousands upon thousands there arose a murmurous "NO!" that swept over him and shook him on his horse like a hurricane. "No!" said the spokesman to him then. "We'll not go away and you'll not go away from this spot till

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you have answered our question." Then the old man bowed his head in prayer, and prayed in silence for a good while, and there wasn't a stir in that multitude nor a sound from the moor barring one pee-weet that had been put up and was circling above the priest's head, complaining lonely to the night. And when Father Phil lifted his head again, "Good people," said he, "you have asked me a question and you have insisted on its being answered. Hear then my answer: If in the veins of all the thousands of thousands of you that I see here to-night, there be as much blood as would sit on the point of a pin, *there is a chance for you.*"

And the instant he said that, up from all the ranks of all of them thousands there arose a wail the most heart-rending he'd ever heard in his life, and a gust of wind swept past him, and the road, which an instant before had been covered by thousands and thousands of little people, was now, as far as his eye could see, white and deserted.

And the old man who told you this story always took care to explain that as our Saviour had died for human beings—for people with blood in their veins—then if in the veins of all these thousands there had been the slightest trace of blood, for them, too, had He died, and for them was there chance of redemption. But they knew

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they were spirits and bloodless! May the kind Lord forever pity them! And amen! amen!

Many was the head that was shaken for them and many was the heart melted in the circle around the fireside when the doleful tale was told. And many is the old woman who that night mixed a pitying prayer for them among the trimmings to the Rosary. Father Phil, though the holiest man that ever was—none of all of you ever doubted that—was still human and might have been mistaken in his verdict. You all hoped he was wrong for once in his life. Anyway, God's mercy is beyond bounds! Thanks be to Him!

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AND 'tis plain to be seen that the Fairies were hopeful themselves. For they got over the fright Father Phil's answer gave them. And 'twasn't long till they were just as jokesome and pranksome as ever again. When Brian O'Hart, the merriest lad on the mountain-side and the pride of the parish for singing, was returning home from Johnny Ward's wedding in Carrig-a-cleava—in the small hours of the morning, crossing the bog just below his own house, didn't he find himself suddenly surrounded by troops of the little people, who caught hands and danced and sang in a ring around him while my brave Brian stood there dumbfounded, like Tom-fool-in-the-middle. And when they'd danced their dance and laughed heartily at poor Brian's nonplusment, they told him the fame of his singing had reached Fairyland and they'd come there that night to hear his best song. "Give us," they said, "*An cailin deas cruidhte na mbo.*" (The Pretty Girl milking her cow)." And my brave Brian, in the ring of fairies, in the middle of the bog, at two o'clock in the morning, sang them the rare old Irish song—sang it far finer and sweeter than he'd ever sung it in his life

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before, and to the most delighted audience he'd ever met with. They loaded him with praises, told him if they could ever be of use to him to command them, and, releasing him, sent Brian home a happy man. It's often and often you heard Brian himself—a gray-haired man in your young days—tell the story. And again and again, as Brian told the story, at wedding or wake, you heard many another old man, sitting by, claim his share of the glory by corroboration—boasting that he was at Johnny Ward's wedding the same night, and saw Brian there.

But there was a sad one among the glad fairies—the banshee. The banshee was the saddest of all the fairy clan, and the most affectionate likewise. Your mother's family, like all the true old Irish families, had its faithful banshee, the little white woman who, in the middle of the night, on the eve of a family death, seated herself on the limb of a tree close by the home, and there, combing her long black locks, raised the three heart-rending wails that sent a deathly shiver to the hearts of all within hearing, and apprised them that death was coming to claim another toll. Not once, but five times your own mother had heard the banshee. Though few they are who ever saw the banshee, your mother was privileged once, but only got a waft of her though, as she flitted from a tree.

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She had an eerie appearance, like a very little hunch-backed woman all in white, but with a great mass of long black flowing locks. And many a night when you hurried home alone from the story-telling at Padraig O'Hegarty's, you thought a thousand times you caught a glimpse, or heard the stirring, of the same little white woman sitting in the sycamore tree that hangs overhead where the road is doubly dark by the Bridge of Brackey. And, with your heart in your mouth, you flew like a swallow the rest of the way home. But it always wasn't the banshee after all—but only a night bird sometimes. No matter for that. That same Bridge, at night, seldom wanted for something uncanny.

Yet you wouldn't run like that if you met a leprechaun. Leastways you wouldn't run like that *from* him. He's the luckiest lad to meet of all the fairy tribe. Because he's not only the fairy cobbler, but their treasure-keeper likewise. It is the leprechaun who knows where all the crocks of gold in Ireland are. And you know, in Ireland, there are crocks of gold galore—only unfortunately they're all hidden. But you knew that, if you only came on the leprechaun unawares in the gray twilight, when he was cobbling the fairy shoes under the fairy thorn, and took him by the scruff of the neck and kept your eyes firmly fixed

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on him, there was no way for him to escape till he'd confessed to you (which he must always do truly) where the nearest crock of gold was hidden. To be sure, he, being the trickiest of all the fairy tribe, puts his wits to work to get your eye off him for a fraction of an instant that he may vanish—which the spell of mortal eye prevents him doing. If you are wise and wary and won't be surprised into lifting your eye off him on any account, he'll have to purchase his freedom by truly telling the hiding-place of the crock. You knew many a man in the countryside who'd grown suddenly rich, and all the world as well as you knew that it was because he had caught his leprechaun. Owen a-Kieran was long years looking for his leprechaun, however, before he caught him. Owen had often boasted that he'd let no leprechaun trick him as they had tricked many a man of your acquaintance, who thereby lost the wealth that was within his grasp. Accordingly the clever Owen, when he at length found his leprechaun cobbling under the fairy thorn one lovely Autumn twilight, gave him to understand in few words that there wasn't any use in all his tricks, for Owen's eagle eye would never budge from off him, till he'd shown where the gold was hidden. So the outgeneralled lad at last had to tell that the crock was buried twenty feet beneath

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a tall *bouchaillin-buidhe** that grew by Owen's toe. The happy Owen could then afford to let his leprechaun vanish—which he did. But, before going home to get his men and picks and spades and shovels, Owen took care to tie his red handkerchief on the particular *bouchaillin-buidhe* under which his fortune lay; for on this same hill, more by token, there were ten thousand *bouchaillins*, each of them the pattern of the other. And Owen—with good reason—chuckled again for his own cleverness. And, ha! ha!—it's a thousand times you've heard and laughed over it—when Owen with twenty neighbours and twenty picks and spades and shovels came back on the hill at break o' day to dig up the gold that would make him a millionaire forevermore, lo and behold you! wasn't there a red handkerchief tied on every *bouchaillin-buidhe* on all the hill!

And till the day of his death Owen a-Kieran couldn't hear the word leprechaun mentioned without flying into a passion. No wonder!

It was no leprechaun Denis Gastha met—but a lad more serious. On one Hallow Eve Denis and his son Nealis were fishing off Loughross. They not only wanted a little luxury for supper on that feast, but hoped also to earn a few shillings. With the long lines they

*Benweed.

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were fishing; and the "take" was pretty good. But suddenly, though the sky had been clear and settled and the sea likewise, a mist began to roll out from the land, and the sea got troubled as the mist came over it. Very soon the mist had enveloped the boat, which now began to rock and toss in a way that terrified Nealis greatly. Down in the bottom of the boat he got on his hands and knees, and prayed silently and fervently.

Denis Gastha was both troubled and puzzled by the strange happening. He remembered then how on the evening before, when he was returning home—in a bad enough temper, for he had caught only three flukes, which he carried with him on a withy—a strange young man, very small, whom he met on the road, asked to have one of the fish, and he had given the queer stranger a surly answer, and passed on. Recalling this, Denis now asked Nealis if he had the clasp-knife with him.

"Yes," Nealis said, "I have."

"Then take it out and open it," said Denis Gastha. Nealis did so.

"Now," Denis said, "you're young and strong, stand up and face the mist, and with all the veins of your heart throw the knife, point foremost, into it." Nealis stood up, and, taking strong footing in the boat and gathering all his strength,

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plunged the knife into the mist. A great shriek that made Nealis's heart tremble came back.

"Thank God! It's well," Denis Gastha said, and, in a few minutes, there was no more any mist, and the sea settled down as calm as it had been.

Early on the next morning, that is Hallow Day, which is the day of the great Fair of Ardara, Thady Brennan of Altcor was on his way to the Fair, when, at the Garran Ban, he overtook a small young man, who was lamenting to himself.

"God save you, young stranger," Thady said, "and what is it is troublin' you?"

The young man didn't say: "God save yourself" in return, but he looked at Thady sorrowfully, and then raised his right hand, through the centre of which a big clasp-knife was stuck, and said: "Will you pull out that clasp-knife from me?"

"Oh, God protect you, my poor young stranger," Thady said, "I will that." And there and then he drew it out. And Thady was astonished to find that no blood flowed from the wound.

"Now," the young man said, "I am forever grateful to you. May you always prosper, and everything ever you put your hand to. I ask your pardon for doing this," and he rubbed his hand over Thady's eyes and then disappeared. When Thady looked around and could not see him, he

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went away in wonder, and was concluding with himself that he had met a fairy.

But lo, ere Thady had got near Ardara, he began to see the Little People in drifts and droves, and singly and in pairs, some riding and some walking, some driving cattle and some without, coming down off the hills and the moors, and coming by *cassies*, lanes, and by-ways, on to the main road, and flocking to the fair likewise. They were all dressed out very neatly and cleanly. The men had pure white shirt-fronts and black ties tied with flowing bow-knots, and wore shining black clothes of the best home-made, and their boots, too, shone so that they might see themselves in them. Of the women, some rode on pillions behind their men (with an arm clasped round the men's waist to steady them in their seats), and some of them walked; and all of them were more handsomely dressed than the men. They had many ribbons, of the colours of the rainbow, plaited in the long plaits of hair that fell down their backs to the waist and below it, and they had many more ribbons decorating different parts of their dress, which was made of fine wool, and looked as rich as silk.

All were very light-hearted, as people will be, going to a fair: they chatted, and bantered, and laughed right heartily, so that Thady could hear

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the musical ring of it floating away up the valleys. Those that were on horseback smiled and kissed back their hands to those whom they passed walking; and those that walked laughed up to them, and tripped dancingly as if it was merrier to walk than to ride. The cows and *stirrs* they drove were very small, and very sleek and nice, and they went at a slinging pace, snapping a bite of sweet green grass now and again, tossing their heads, and whisking their tails with pleasure, as if they, too, highly enjoyed going to a fair. Thady also saw several little fairy-women taking to the fair the drollest-looking little pigs mortal ever set eyes on—very knowing-looking little fellows, smaller far than bonniveens (sucking pigs). The women had a string tied to the pig's hind leg, by which they kept it under control—or, rather, tried to—for, more tricky little pigs Thady never saw. They pretended to mistake for the right road every way they knew surely was the wrong; and they showed a lot of stubborn persistence and squealed frightfully when the women tugged at the strings with all their force to coax them to come right again. This made much merriment for all who went untroubled with pigs themselves; and the fun was furious, if the pig, convinced by force that it took the wrong way and coming back on the road, coolly started towards home again—and,

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with much struggle and noise, debated the point with its driver—sometimes getting itself and its driver and the rope all mixed up, and, when extricated, dashing away with all its speed and dragging after it an unwilling mistress, who, however badly she felt her ridiculous position, found it better to put the best face on matters, and pretend to enjoy the joke herself.

Thady came to the fair, and in the market-place saw ten times more Little People than Christians. They were buying and selling, haggling, and “splitting the differ,” just like mortals; and some of them going about in pairs, with sticks under their arms, looking with cunning eyes at various stock, drawing their sticks and hitting a beast here and there to put it for view in a new position, pricing it and walking on if not satisfied to bargain for it. He saw beasts bought and prices counted out in small golden pieces about the size of fish-scales; and the seller generally spat on the last golden piece and gave it back as *luck's-penny*; and all adjourned to a tent, where they drank to the health and success of buyer and seller, and of the beast.

Thady, hearing much and loud laughter coming from the pig-market, hurried there to find what was the cause. He found that one particularly perverse little pig, which had created much amuse-

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ment coming to the fair, was at its tricks again. She was a fat wee woman who owned it; and she was now sweating, and very red in the face; for the pig (which had a very knowing eye, Thady noted, and seemed to see more behind than before) wished to go in any and every direction now its mistress wanted it to stand still. It jumped clean over another pig's rope, and then squealed enough for five pigs because one hind leg didn't get over, but was caught and strained; and when its mistress relieved it, it tried to dive through the wheel of a fairy cart in which fairy bonniveens were for sale, where it got its head jammed, and began to squeal enough for eleven pigs. Then it dashed pell-mell through a lot of boxes of brooches and *fairlies* that were exposed for sale, and the owner of these, very angry, hastened to slap it sharply with her open hand drawn with all her might; whereupon its vexed mistress, undeservedly enough, took the pig's part, and scolded the *fairin* woman, who, on her part, scolded back with interest. And it was only the pig's going off on a new path of destruction, and dragging its panting owner with it, that averted active hostilities.

Half the fair of the Little People were gathered around in hearty enjoyment of the funny scene, for what heightened the amusement was that, not

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only was the owner of the pig in a hot, bad temper, but all who had pigs or carts, or any sort of goods, in her neighbourhood, were out of temper likewise, over the annoyance given them by her and her perverse pig. So they scolded loudly, and beat the pig smartly—making it still more cantankerous. And the owner of the pig scolded back as best she could for the running, the tugging, and the panting, and the choking wrath the wicked animal was causing her. And when at length the pig ran between the feet of a scolding woman who guarded an apple-stand, and twisted around, and caught the woman's leg in the rope, while the woman, not waiting to free herself, struck out at the pig's owner, who struck back, and both fell to the boxing, the pig, himself, squealing and screaming, ran round and round till he had fairly entangled the two combatants in the rope; and both of them fell over against the apple-stand, which went down along with them, scattering the apples in every direction, while the pig, standing on top of the mixed heap of mortals and apples and apple-stand, screamed at the top of his voice. Such of the crowd as were not entirely overcome with the laughter began jostling for the fruit, till, in another minute, a heap of the bystanders, mixed heels and heads, were thrown on top of all, and nothing was distinguish-

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able but the fearful squealing of the pig from under the ludicrous heap!

Thady Brennan, he could hold in no longer, but burst into a great, loud and hearty fit of laughter. Instantly, all the Little People, silenced, turned upon Thady surprised and wrathful looks. On the moment there came up the same young man out of whose hand Thady had drawn the knife that morning: and to him Thady nodded familiarly and spoke. The wrathful looks of the gathering were instantly turned from Thady to the young man. "Is it you?" they said, "who have done this?"

A real mortal pig running at this moment across Thady tripped him up with its rope. He capsized, and a little old gray fellow of the fairies, running up, rubbed his hand across Thady's eyes, and lo! all the Little People and their pigs and their cattle and apples and apple-stands, and everything belonging to them, instantly vanished—and Thady Brennan lost his gift forever!

But everything that Thady put his hand to afterwards prospered, in accordance with the fairy's blessing. As it should.

No matter for the fairies' tricks, the Gentle People love all Irish folk—and Ireland herself likewise. Oftentimes, when footing it all the way over the hill of Mullinashee when you were

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going to the bog on a May day, you thought upon the cave beneath your feet under the green hill-side, where the fairies hold in fairy sleep Red Hugh, the dauntless warrior who warred so long for Ireland's rights—hold him and his thousand followers, lying each man with his hand on his sword by the side of his steed, waiting for the hour when Erin calls them to ride boldly forth and lead the van in the glorious final fight for Ireland's freedom. And you often thought with a thrill of that strange happening nearly a hundred years ago now when a Bally-ma-Cahill man, riding home from the Fair of Donegal, had his horse purchased from him by a tall, soldierly-looking, dark man, who asked him to lead the animal into a cave on the side of the hill of Mullinashee. And far within, they reached the great gates of a beautiful castle; and in the court-yard were a thousand men stretched by the side of a thousand steeds, both men and horses slumbering. And when the Bally-ma-Cahill man accidentally struck a great gong with his toe, every sleeper of the thousand was on one knee in an instant, one hand on his sword and the other on his horse's mane, and a man asked: "Is the time come?" The tall stranger, waving his hand to them, answered: "Not yet. Sleep on!" And every soldier of them dropped in sleep by the side of his steed again, while the

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Bally-ma-Cahill man was quickly conveyed from the cave, the entrance to which he or any other mortal never could find after, and never knew before. For the fairies (Heaven bless them!) keep these men guarded and concealed, till comes THE TIME! God hasten it!

And when THE TIME has come, and Ireland has won her long, long fight, she'll ten times more fondly cherish the Gentle People who helped her in her hour of need, and hold them ten thousand times nearer and dearer. And meantime you and all belonging to you will never cease to pray, as you have been praying, that a kind God will look kindly on the Gentle Outcasts and bring them to their own again.

WHEN THE TINKERS CAME

THIS is how they came. After you had your hay harvested, and your potatoes stored, and your turf home, and Long Michael of the Moor bid to the thrashin' of the corn, you were sitting by your roarin' hearth-fire of a night, smoking the pipe of content, and hearkening to the first wail of the winter's wind; little Patsy, Johnen Og and Una, stretched on the floor, were striving (both mentally and physically) with their lesson-books by the fire-light; and Herself was setting in a neat row upon the white dresser the bowls from which the household had been supping stir-about (food for princes!), and you were feeling at peace with yourself and the whole world, when there came a rattle on the latch and the door opened, and a head, under an ill-conditioned *caubín*, was shoved in, hailing: "God's blessin' on all here!" drawing from yourself and Herself the prompt response, "On yourself, stranger, likewise. Won't ye step in?"

"Thank ye, thank ye, good woman; and thank you, good man. I just put in my head for to know if you had any objection to a lock of us shelterin' here the night? I have a couple of asses without,

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and I have the woman herself an' a grain o' childer. We're travellin' people, ma'am," adroitly appealing to woman's sympathy.

"Och, surely, God help you creatures, ye can," Molly herself said. And you took your pipe from your mouth, and said likewise.

"Certainly, certainly. Turn the asses into the field beyont, and come in here yourselves. There's little room; but what there is, you're hearty welcome to."

For, of course, wanderer was never yet turned from your door. The houseless and homeless and the penniless poor had always the warm word and the welcome smile by your hearth.

This time, however, you knew not what you had brought on yourself, till it was too late. In three shakes of a lamb's lug your kitchen was crammed with myriads of tinkers, great and small, while a multitude of asses were turned into your choice field of after-grass, that you had been stingily saving up to coax milk from the *mooly* cow round the winter. You were forced far from the heat of your own hearth; your amazed children swept to the wall-side, and Molly driven for refuge to the room; while the tinkers—there were many families of them, and yet they all seemed one family!—made their own of your kitchen, and its accommodations, its seats, its mugs, its bowls, its plates and

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knives and spoons, and brought in, too, burden after burden of your turf, piling them stack-high on your hearth, till in dread alarm you most humbly begged them not to burn your house down—and in response got kindly and gracious re-assurance. In your pans they boiled their tea—*boiled* it!—upon the roaring fire, and served it round in all the vessels that they could commandeer, from Una's milking-noggin to Molly's four fancy tea-cups, which she prized as the apple of her eye, and which she used only twice a year (when Father Michael came round upon Stations), but which half a score of embryo tinkers now fished out from their secret place, and then fought for, till you trembled for their fate—the fate of the cups, I mean—whilst to your own three awe-stricken children very little drops of tea were tendered in very large porringers.

Night was turned into day, and the gabble of voices, rarely less than thirteen speaking at one time, ceased not till a welcome winter sun dawned in the morning. You had comparative quiet then, you thanked Heaven. For several hours the gabble died down. The tinkers only lay and sat drowsing around the fire, and occasionally dropping into it, preventing you getting to your own hearth to cook your breakfast, except by exceeding effort and skilful piloting, and plentiful apologizing

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—which apologies they, waking up, always graciously accepted, assuring you it was all right, hitching their seats into yet more inconvenient positions, drooping their heads, and sleeping the sleep of the just again.

After noon their new day began, and they were very much alive once more. The women, in haste for a weapon to whack recalcitrant children, snatched down your picture of Saint Patrick driving out the serpents, and with it effectively re-enacted the amazing miracle. To encourage the dilatory kettle they took Molly's valued pot-stick which Conal the Carpenter had made her as a favour, broke it over their knee, and stuck it in the fire; whilst the children played leap-frog from your kitchen into the one grand room on which Molly had expended untold thought and trouble, and (at the lowest calculation) seventeen shillings and six pence in hard cash; and the men went out to look at the asses, and drive them into a better field if you had such. That day, too, they made a tour of inspection of the neighbours' houses, and billeted their legion in such residences as were approved of—taking care, however, to do particular honour to your hospitable self, by making your house their headquarters and bestowing on you double the number allotted to the next most-fa-

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voured one—so that you were left no excuse for jealousy.

In a few days' time your roof-tree was ringing to the music of tinkers' honest toil; and they whistled and sang light-heartedly, as in the very middle of your floor, where they could cause most obstruction, they industriously tinkered all day. When you barked your shins upon their tins, or smashed your toe against their soldering iron, or tripped and fell and broke your bones over their outstretched legs, they gave you no ill-word for your stupidity, but instead assured you, with the generosity of the great-hearted, that it was all right and no harm done. They gave you the impression that they earnestly desired you to make yourself completely at home in the house, and not stand upon forms with them. Yet you began painfully to realize that you were an impertinent intruder in this house; and, whenever you got in their way—and sure you were for ever blundering into their way,—you were abjectly grateful that the forbearing fellows refrained from flinging things at your head.

They were fiddlers, of course—fiddlers and fifers and pipers. Music and tinkering were sister graces with them always, and there wasn't any of their men who couldn't play upon some instrument, complex or simple. They were charming singers,

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too, and enchanting whistlers. The fame of your house under control of its new masters spread fast and far. The boys and girls of the barony began gathering to you every night. Very soon, the tinkers, who were ever princely, announced that they would entertain the countryside to a grand dance. And the countryside was duly grateful to them for placing your kitchen at its service. And on the eve of the dance, under kind direction of the tinkers, you, with much groaning both of body and spirit, bore out of doors everything portable in your home that was not an absolute necessity in a dance-house. And the countryside came in its numbers and its Sunday clothes, cramming and jamming your house from hearth-stone to threshold, dancing and enjoying itself to the tinkers' piping till morning, leaving silver and thanks to the generous fellows who had given it this most enjoyable treat and had promised it another soon, and bidding a perfunctory good morning to yourself, who felt like an interloper graciously tolerated in the house of mirth.

It was a merry and a lively winter indeed, all that winter in which you and your wife and three little children lodged in your own house by the grace of the tinkers—a very lively, pleasant winter, truly! You didn't enjoy it, of course—you somehow never do enjoy the good things God

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sends you—for you had a load of some kind over your heart, and Herself, strange to say, looked care-worn; and your children somehow or other got a frightened appearance which it took them five years to wear off again; and one of you seldom saw your own fire. Your best grass-fields were bare as a table ere winter was half through; and your haystack fell a victim to galloping consumption. But still it was a merry and a lively winter. There's no denying that—everyone said so.

When winter's back was broken, and the longed-for Patrickmas sun danced in of your door, the tinkers stretched themselves and considered it was time to be jogging a bit. You did your best of course to persuade them that it was only young in the year yet, and they shouldn't be in a hurry. These great-minded fellows smiled at your simplicity—or selfishness. They had wasted a whole winter upon you, and now that the sun of spring had come, it was little enough to ask that you should learn to lean on yourself. So you had to thank them profusely, and wring their hands warmly and long as you wished them good-bye, earnestly begging to know when they would come again. They couldn't satisfy you on this, but to your consternation promised that, whenever they should return to the neighbourhood, you might

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rest assured no slight would be put upon your house.

Then they were gone—I rather mean going. For it took some time from the starting of the head of the caravan, till, having unfolded itself to its tedious extent, the tail was in motion. You, when the procession had disappeared, turned into your house, very thoughtfully smoking your pipe. Molly had gone in before you. Ye sat down one on each side of the hearth, and both of ye looking into the fire; but neither of ye said anything. Ye were too full for utterance.

When in the early afternoon of that bright day—it was a *very* bright day, one of the brightest you ever remember—people, passing, observed the tinkers camping in the shade of a high hedge five miles farther on, the women boiling tea, and the men beating out tins, they said: “The tinkers have left Long Johneen’s—the more’s the pity!”

But both of ye said, down in your hearts: “Thanks be to God for all His mercies!”

THE TALES YOU TOLD

THEY were the old, old tales that had come down to you ripened and sweetened, like your pipe, with the ages—barring that the years of the tales were as the days of the pipe. And men and women were like little children listening, even for the thousandth time, to the same tale; and could go without food or drink for fondness of hearing you tell them.

And you told them—sometimes going to Mass or Market, when the neighbours needed the weary miles cut; or at the wake-house, when the night was long and the company wanted cheering; but, more often and better, seated in your own corner, by the big blazing turf fire, pulling your pipe, and watching the queer shadows of the spellbound ones, like listening ghosts, leaping on the walls and bobbing over the brown rafters. And all the more magical was it when the soft stillness without told you that the snow-weaver, shooting his silent shuttle, wove its mantle of white peace for the slumbering world—or when you felt the winds, like Pookas from the hills, leaping upon the little cabin, making the rafters groan and the

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foundation rock, and your audience shiver with the bliss of shelter and security.

And your tales were all beautiful—whether they chanted the noble deeds of the immortal Fionn, the fascinating adventures of *Mac Ri na nEireann* (the King of Ireland's son) detailed the irresistible rogueries of the matchless vagabond Jack, or followed the fortunes of the poor Widow Woman's Three Sons—or even when they exalted country wisdom—tickling the fancy, and flattering the innocent vanity, and calling down the loud-murmured encomiums of the delighted circle, just as in

THE WILL OF THE WISE MAN

The time that the Wise Man lived was far longer ago than I could tell you, and twice longer ago than you could tell me. It was a time when wise men were as common as wattle sticks in Ireland, and a man couldn't wind his elbow without striking one. When wise men were so plentiful he must have been an extraordinary one entirely who would be called "The Wise," as was an old Prince by the name of Phelim, who had for his possession the wooded lands of Ardloe, and whose name and fame were mighty indeed, and went to the ends of the then known world. He was named *The Wise* during his lifetime; and has been known

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as such ever since, barrin' for one twelve months during which people called him Phelim the Fool—the reason for which makes my story.

And 'twas this was the way of it.

Phelim had four sons, Conal and Donal, and Manis and Phelimy Og (or young Phelim). The three eldest, Conal and Donal and Manis, were harum-scarum lads—gamesters and wastrels who never knew God's grace, and were of no account to king or country. They hunted, sported and spent, and the world gave in it was their misdoings that brought their poor old father's gray hairs in shame to the grave before God's good time.

The fourth and youngest son, Phelimy Og, was, on the other hand, the model of what a brave boy and a good son ought to be, but possessed what was better—a good heart and God's grace. And he was the stay and comfort of the old man.

That is what made the Wiseman's Will, when he died, so strange and such a puzzle to the people, who concluded that, after all, the old saying was a true one: "You ought to call no man a wise man till the worms have done with him."

Many's the man minded this old saw, and wagged his head over it when, Phelim being dead and slipped under the sod, his will was opened and read.

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For this was the wonderful way that the Wise Man's will went:

"To my eldest son, Conal, I bequeath and bestow all that's green and all that isn't green on the wooded lands of Ardloe. To my second son, Donal, I bequeath and bestow all that's crooked and all that's straight on the wooded lands of Ardloe. To my third son, Manis, I bequeath and bestow all that moves and all that stands still on the wooded lands of Ardloe. And to my youngest son, Phelimy Og, I bequeath and bestow the remainder."

The world, when it heard the will read, was dumbfounded, and said that the dead man must surely have taken leave of his senses before he wrote anything so silly. It was bad enough for him, people thought, to leave all of his property to each one of the three sons at the same time; but when, after willing away all he owned three times over, to say he bequeathed to Phelimy Og what remained was a sorry joke and a cruel one to crack at the expense of the poor boy who was his only credit, and who loved and cared him, and so bravely stuck to him through thick and thin. It passed all comprehending, they said. And they got so mad with the man who was dead that to make up for the favour they had shown him in life, when they miscalled him Phelim the Wise,

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they then and there christened him Phelim the Fool.

Now, the wooded lands of Ardloe were the finest game preserve in Ireland; and, on that account, drew the sports and gamesters from Ireland's ends to hunt and shoot there. And it was why the dead man, Phelim, had come to call these woods a curse to him instead of a blessin', since the gamesters and sports that they gathered, and the game that they offered, were the very means of spoilin' and makin' good-for-nothin' his three eldest boys. And it was often he prayed God that a hare or a deer might never shake a foot, nor a wood-cock call, within their bounds again—prayers that were, to be sure, sadly in vain; for so long as the birds and the animals got here the widest range and closest cover to be found in Ireland, they thronged them and bred like beetles.

'Twas only a few months ere the old man died that he discovered the lands of Ardloe were becoming of rare value, gold being discovered in them, and the engineers pronouncing that it only wanted the clearing away of the woods which crowded every foot of them for miners to get to work, and make them the richest resource that Ireland ever knew.

Well and good. Phelim, the Fool, as we may now call him, wasn't cold in his clay when the

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wastrels that he left behind him, Conal and Donal and Manis, were at one another's throats, fightin' like devils for a property whose every foot was now a fortune—the Wooded Lands of Ardloe—which each of them claimed had been willed to him and him alone.

Phelimy Og, poor fellow, as he conceived he had no claim whatsoever in the matter, left the three good-for-nothings to settle the dispute among themselves; and went to the King, who had been a good friend of his father's, to apply for a job by which he could feed and clothe himself an' live in modest decency. And the King, takin' pity on him, gave him the post of undergroom in his stables, to which Phelimy went grateful and thankful, not worryin' the world with any complaint he had against it, but prepared to spend, from that day forward, a hard-working, industrious life.

Conal and Donal and Manis, when they had long enough disputed with small signs of their agreein', came at last into the city of Armagh, where the King had his palace, and put their case before him, and asked him to decide what was just between them. But, when he read the will, he was a sore, nonplussed man. He shook his head and told them to go further, for that it flabbergasted him out-an'-out, though he was a King.

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"And what are we to do?" they asked.

"If you's don't divide into three equal parts, an' share an' share alike," says the King, says he, "the Wooded Lands of Ardloe, I don't know what else you can do."

"I'll not share an' share alike with anyone in a property as you see set down in black and white has been willed to me, entire," says Conal.

"I'll not share an' share alike with man or mortal in a property that has been entirely willed to me—as a blind man may see for himself," says Donal.

"An' I'm very sure," says Manis, says he, "that I'm not such a fool as to share an' share alike with soul or sinner in the Wooded Lands of Ardloe that have by that written parchment been put into my whole, sole, an' complete possession. It's in a lunatic asylum an' not at large I ought to be," says he, "if I turned such a trick."

"Well! well!" says the King, says he, "there's nothin' for it but to take your case afore the judges. As they're wiser than all other men in these matters, an' accustomed to clearin' up contrairy wills, if there's any readin' of the riddle, they'll read it."

Now, the King, he sent out messengers to the first and greatest judges in his dominions, summoning them to come into Armagh immediately, and sit upon an extraordinary case which had come

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up for decision. An' in short time the judges were crowdin' into the city, walkin', runnin', and ridin'. An' the King, himself, went down to the Courts when they sat, an' all the people of the city of Armagh that could find standin' room crowded the Courts, also; for all of them had learnt of the comical will of Phelim the Fool, and came in wonderment to watch what the judges would make out of it. An' Conal an' Donal an' Manis were there, every one of them, to state his case—with dozens of witnesses and councillors by the score, ready to prove that black was white, and white was gogram gray—or anything else that was needful. And on the case the great an' noble judges of the Kingdom of Armagh, with the great, wise High Chief Judge himself over them all, sat for seven days, an' seven nights, hearin' an' deliberatin' an' argufyin', sleepin' in relays where they sat, and takin' their meals from their fists without quittin' the Bench. An' the excitement in the Court an' in the city of Armagh, an' over all the country, for miles an' miles around, was tremendous, an' grew greater an' greater as the case proceeded, till at last the people threatened to mutiny, an' rebel, an' rise out, an' kill an' slaughter all before them, if the Judges of the High Court with the High Chief Justice of them all, over them, didn't soon come to a decision, an'

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a proper one, an' one that would satisfy everybody. An' the very King himself got mightily afraid.

But, lo and behold ye! at the end of the seven days and seven nights, when everything that could be said in the case, an' that couldn't be said in it, everything that bore on it, an' everything that didn't bear on it, was heard an' proven, the distracted judges asked for an hour's peace to consider their final decision, which was granted to them. An' the people waited without drawin' their breaths to hear what would come of it. But, behold ye, before the half of an hour was up, the officer who was at the door of the room where the judges had retired had to send for the sojers, to rid the judges out of one another! An' no two of them could be allowed to lodge in the same street that night.

The people got into a terrible way entirely. An' it took all that the King and his councillors could do to soothe them, an' keep them from breakin' out an' slayin' all comin' their way. Many of them didn't go to bed at all, at all, an' couldn't sleep if they did go to bed. But they marched the streets up an' down, cursin' the law an' the lawyers, an' singin' rebellious songs, an' kickin' up the frightfullest hullabaloo that had been heard in the city of Armagh since the day it was christened.

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Towards break o' day, they gathered in the market square, an' to mark their aggravation at the judges, agreed that the first man to enter the city gates in the morning, though he might be a lunatic, or a travelling tinker, should be made High Chief Judge over the city, an' the Kingdom of Armagh, for a year an' a day. An' they'd put him in the High Judge's robes, an' set him in the High Judge's place, an' bring all their cases before him.

The King, who was sorely piqued against the judges himself, right heartily gave his consent, which mollified them one and all, and restored order, an' gave the soldiers control of the city again before day dawned.

At break o' day they were one an' all assembled at the city gate, watchin' for the first wayfarer who'd be lucky enough to come along—or unlucky. An' the sun had only begun to get his shoulder over the hill when, in the far distance along the white road, they saw a speck comin' an' gettin' larger an' larger, till, at length, they made a man out o' it. The excitement grew great as he came nearer, they waitin' an' watchin' an' tryin' to make out his appearance an' features, an' to guess what he was at all, at all. An' when he had, at length, come so close that they could make out a little dark countryman, dressed in homespuns,

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an' with his belongin's done up in a red handkerchief hangin' from the stick over his shoulder, they put up such a cheer an' laugh as made the gates rattle, an' brought the little dark countryman to a standstill, wondering what was the joke in the city.

And when he reached the gates they questioned him who he was, and what, and where he was travellin' to.

He answered them that he was only a poor man from Donegal, his name was Patrick, and, by reason of his very black head and beard and dark features, he went among his neighbours by the name of Dark Patrick; an' he was pushin' to Armagh, he said, to see the King, regarding a little bit of bog that he had always depended upon for his winter's fire, and which a rich and greedy grabber, to whom the whole bog was of small account, wanted to deprive him of.

"Well," says they, "though you've come to beg for a bit of bog, the King's been waitin' for you to put you in the place of his High Chief Judge, dress you in silk and satin robes, and let you sit for a year an' a day in his High Court, dispensin' justice between man an' man."

Dark Patrick replied to them that he was weary and worn after his long tramp from Donegal, an' not in spirits for jokin', an' that, moreover, the

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citizens of the King's own city should be more honourable and hospitable than to poke fun at the poor and the stranger. "Let me get on," he said, "to see the King, an' start for home again; for I'm a simple countryman, not used to city ways. It's seldom I ever lose sight of my own chimney, an', when I do, I'm ill at ease till I see it again."

They laughed hearty at this, an' said he was the man of all men they were lookin' for. An' a couple of big fellows of them hoisted Dark Patrick on their shoulders an' started off, with a tremendous crowd roarin' an' cheerin' behind, an' two men in front, carrying a banner on which was written in large letters, "Welcome, welcome, to our new Chief Judge!" The King ordered him to be lodged in the Head Inns of the town, an' treated to the best, an' restored after his long journey, an' then put upon the Bench to fill the space that all the other judges, now in disgrace, showed themselves unfit to fill. "This poor man from the mountain," the King said, "mayn't be much of a lawyer, nor have half a head, nor average wisdom about him, but I'll guarantee he's no worse than the dunderheads that have disgraced the Bench." An' they were one an' all that hour dismissed from his service.

Patrick was whisked off then, an' showed into

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the Head Inns, an' the King's orders given to the landlord how he was to treat him as if he was a gentleman. An' on the very next mornin' the crowd—who'd now got into good humour again—came early to carry the countryman back to the Courts, an' have their fun with him. There wasn't a bit o' use in Patrick's protestin'. They hoisted him on their shoulders, an' away with a mighty multitude cheerin' behind.

The King had come down to the Courts himself to enjoy the fun, also. An' he had a front seat on the gallery, an', when Patrick was put upon the Bench, an' the Court was jammed, crammed, an' rammed with every soul that it could hold without bursting, the Court Crier called out and asked if there was anyone had any case to bring forward, an' put before their new High Chief Judge. An' it struck the King that it would be a grand joke for to put before the poor mountain man the will of Phelim the Fool, an' asking him to decide upon it.

So, he spoke out, an' asked why shouldn't the will case that the disgraced judges had failed to settle be put before their new High Chief Judge, to find what would be his verdict? The crowd cried with delight at the grand idea, an' shouted out: "The Will Case! The Will Case! Bring Phelim the Fool's Will Case before him!"

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Now, the little dark man upon the Bench had been fidgettin' and feelin' bad. But when Phelim the Fool's will was produced, an' the chief lawyer in the Court below began to read it to him, it was noticed, all of a sudden, he got interested, and soon leant over very attentive. And as the lawyer went on with the readin', Patrick shoved off him the ridiculous robes they had put him into, an' sat so sedately, an' listened with such intelligence, that the crowd in the Court, an' even the King himself, stopped their laughin' an' their jokin', an' began to get interested themselves, watchin' the face of the simple countryman who sat on the Bench in homespuns. An' when the will was done readin', there was silence in the Court, everyone holding his breath to hear what Dark Patrick would say.

An' he asked: "Are the contestants of this will here?"

"They are," says the people, an' they pushed forward Conal and Donal and Manis. Everyone of them stated his case solemn and brave, an' particularly pointed out how ten times more valuable the property now was by reason of the gold mines discovered under it; and proved, each to his own satisfaction, that the Wooded Lands of Ardloe belonged to him, an' him alone. An' the little man upon the Bench was watchin' everyone of them

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very sharply entirely, as they gave their evidence—never sayin' one word or askin' one question, but lettin' them ramble on till they were finished. And the people were wondering mightily at Patrick's self-possession—as was also the King.

"My three good boys," says Dark Patrick, says he, when the three brothers had finished their statement, "I should like to ask ye one question?"

"Surely," says they, politely, for in spite of themselves, like every other body in the Court, they had got a mighty respect for the little dark mountainman sittin' on the Bench. "Surely," says they, "a hundred if you like."

"Thank you," says the little man on the Bench; "one will be sufficient for me. Tell me," says he, "how have you three fine, brave, able-lookin' boys been leadin' your lives, an' supportin' yourselves, an' helpin' your father since you came to years of sense and discretion?"

The three lads, a good deal staggered, hemmed an' hawed, an' said a good deal without sayin' anythin'; till the little man, when he was tired listening to their mumbling, spoke out, an' asked if any dependable person in the Court would come forward an' answer for him the question that these lads seemed so tedious about replyin' to. The King himself, no less, got on his legs, and told Patrick the truth of the matter, an' the sort of

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gamesters, an' hunters, an' spendthrifts these lads had ever been, an' that it was the world's wonder why their poor father, whose heart they had broken, ever willed them anything. But since he did will it so, law was law, an' not people's likin'. So the silly will must be administered.

"Humph!" says Patrick, says he, that way. "I see. Tell me," says he, "where's the fourth party named in this will? Phelimy Og, if I don't mistake the name."

"Oh," says the King, says he, "he is earnin' his day's wage as under-groom in my stables. Don't bother about him, since his father bequeathed him nothing. Decide the case," says he, "if you can, as between these three men that have claims on it; for it's too much time an' temper has been wasted over it already."

"That's very good," says Dark Patrick, says he, "but I'm a peculiar kind of a man, an' when I take a notion I like to be humoured in it. I'm anxious to hear the character of this Phelimy Og—what sort of a son he was, and how he spent his time."

"Oh," says the King, says he, "so far as that goes, the poor fellow was all right." An' he went on to tell about the good son Phelimy was, an' to lament that his unnatural father left to him nothin' but a joke.

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“Will you please send for Phelimy Og, then, till he, too, hears my verdict,” says Dark Patrick, says he. The King was getting impatient, but someone advised him it was better to humour the little man on the Bench, anyway.

So, Phelimy Og was sent for, an’ came into Court breathless, gettin’ his arms into his coat as he came an’ runnin’ his fingers through his hair to look decent—for Phelimy was working like a nigger at his new job. Dark Patrick ordered him to stand up at the bar on a line with his three brothers. An’ Phelimy, not knowin’ what was to happen, did as he was bid. An’ the three brothers, dressed an’ done up in the smartest and finest, with their hair shining, cast scornful glances down at Phelimy, who was too much ashamed an’ too bashful to look up at them, but cast his eyes on the ground.

There was a terrible silence entirely in the Court now, an’ every man was listening to his own heart beatin’. An’ the King, himself, was the most eager an’ anxious man there, was the King’s own self, as he leant so far forward out of the seat on which he sat that a couple of people neighbouring him put out their hands to keep him from falling over.

Dark Patrick sat back in his seat on the Bench, an’ lookin’ an’ speakin’ as collected as if he was

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sittin' among the neighbours by his own fireside, begun to give his verdict.

He said: "Your Majesty an' good people all, I have read this will made by him that you have nicknamed Phelim the Fool, an' that I call Phelim the Very Wise. I have read this will, an' heard this case, which is as plain as the meadows o' Meath, and have come to the decision that no man can dispute."

"What is it?" says the King, terribly eager.

"That's what I'm comin' to, your Majesty," says Dark Patrick, very coolly but very respectfully. And the King looked small for a minute. "My decision," says Dark Patrick, "is that the Wooded Lands of Ardloe have been most deservedly willed into the whole, sole, and complete possession of you, Phelimy Og."

Everyone in the Court started—from the King down to Phelimy Og himself.

"It's a lie!" says a hundred angry voices, all at once. "It's a lie! Throw him down!"

Says Dark Patrick, without moving an eyelid: "Since I've been appointed High Chief Judge by the King settin' there, I, in my capacity as High Chief Judge, will take insult from no man—crowned or uncrowned," he added. "I'll order the soldiers here to put under arrest the first man

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guilty of contempt of Court, and I defy disobedience."

Even the King, he bowed his head to this. Unless he scouted and flouted his own laws, he had to acknowledge that the little dark mountainman on the Bench had the upper hand even of himself.

"On your peril, keep quiet," says the King, says he, to all his subjects in the Court.

Dark Patrick, no way affected, took up his speech again.

"To you, Phelimy Og," says he, nodding his head at Phelimy, "is willed, as I said, all the lands of Ardloe. Now, Conal, this document here says that to you belongs all that is green and all that is not green on the Wooded Lands of Ardloe. Very good. And to you, Donal, this document wills all that is crooked, and all that is straight, on the Wooded Lands of Ardloe. Very good again. And to you, Manis, I here see willed all that moves, and all that stands still, on the Wooded Lands of Ardloe. That is to say, every blade of grass, and every stick of timber, and every fin of fish, and every feather of bird, and every foot of animal on the Wooded Lands of Ardloe is the property of you, Conal, Donal and Manis—and for them everyone of you is by law individually responsible. Since your poor father died, the three of you have been trespassers, and

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lawbreakers, in leaving your grass and your trees growing, your fish swimming, your birds flying, and animals running on the Wooded Lands of Ardloe, the property of your youngest brother, Phelimy Og, to whom is here willed all your father's possessions, barring the living and growing things thereon."

There was a great silence entirely in the Court.

Says Dark Patrick: "As the Woods of Ardloe, with all the sporting they supplied, have been so long the ruination of the three of you, your more than wise father decided that they would be your ruination no longer. But wisely willed that you shall profit by being yourselves the instruments for their destruction. Every hour, henceforth, that you allow one of your sticks to stand, or one of your hares to run, upon Ardloe, you are liable to, and must receive, imprisonment, for being deliberate and malicious trespassers. He has wisely willed, too, that you shall have healthful work to do in clearing these lands, and opportunity to reflect upon your useless lives, and that you'll serve the good brother and the faithful son whom you dispossessed—clearing the way for his prospectors and miners to get to work and unearth his wealth. Go," he said; "on your peril, lose no single day till you have begun this useful work, that the

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will and the law now commits you to. What's the next case?" says Dark Patrick.

But the *furore* that instantly got up in that Courthouse, and the deafening cheer after cheer that was raised, forbade anyone thinking of any other case. The King himself got up in his box and led the cheer, and cheered louder than any man there. And as soon as things calmed down, which wasn't for a long time, and during all of which Dark Patrick sat patiently and quietly and humbly, the King spoke out in the presence of all, an' he said to Dark Patrick: "I here now name you as my High Chief Judge, not for a year and a day, but for all the years ever you live, and may they be many. Moreover, I here and now, in the presence of all witnesses, offer you any three requests you choose. Name them."

"Your Majesty," says Dark Patrick, getting to his feet, and leaning upon the Bench, and speaking very respectfully, "your Majesty," says he, "is very, very kind, indeed, to a poor ignorant man from the hills of Donegal, and I feel accordingly grateful. As you have made me such a handsome offer in asking me to name any three requests I choose, I shall take you at your word. My first request," says he, "is that you will here and now relieve me of an office that I'm not fitted for, and that has been put upon me without my consent.

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My second, that you will instil into your people that it is unmanly and unworthy to make fun at the expense of the poor and the stranger coming within your gates. And the third is that for which I travelled to see you all the way from Donegal—namely, that you'll put me in the possession of a little patch of bog from which I every year cut my winter's fire, and which a rich man now covets, and strives to grab from me. If you grant me these three requests—and I know you will, for an honourable King like you never breaks his word—I'll be grateful to you while I live."

Both the King and the crowd were consternated when they heard the three requests, and the people called upon the King to break his word. But Dark Patrick only shook his head, no matter what remonstrances were made, and the King saw that he was concerned, an' that there was no way of getting out of it, and that he must grant the three requests. Which he did. And Dark Patrick, respectfully refusing all offers of wealth and costly presents that the King and people wanted to shower upon him, said to them that these things, while they were of value to the generous givers, were of no value whatsoever to him, who lived plainly and humbly in a little cabin upon a patch of land where he always got enough to eat and sufficient to clothe him, and was now, too, always

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assured of plenty of fire to keep him warm between summer and summer.

“And I have there,” he said, “peace, content, and love of my neighbours. These, with a hill-side of my own, health, and a spade, make me the wealthiest man in the world. Good-bye! God’s blessin’ be with you all, always!”

And, tying his bundle upon his staff, the little dark countryman, in his homespuns, passed out of their gates, and headed him along the white road that pointed for the mountains of Donegal.

WHEN GOD SENT SUNDAY

YOU always felt there could be no scene more cheering, inspiring, and impressive than that of Sunday morning among the mountains, when the neighbours—*bouchal*, *cailin*, man, woman, and child—in their cleanest, in their brightest and best, wound down the green hillsides and over the brown moors, and streamed along the white country roads to Mass. It was surely a refreshing sight, and a joyous one. The sun was in these people's hearts, and in their souls, as well as on their faces. The girls wore their brightest ribbons, the women their bluest cloaks, the boys and men their freshest frieze, or richest broadcloth. Neighbour stepped out with neighbour, and friend with friend, couples gravitating to groups, and groups dissolving again in constituent couples as you went, the hearts of all going lightly as your feet. Though the distance, for many of you, was long miles, and the road—if you had a road at all—rough, you never knew it. Your journey was all too short for the many, many absorbing topics that must be discussed.

When you reached the chapel-yard, the first thought of every one of you was to pray a Pater-

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and-Ave, kneeling by the graveside of a dear one departed. After which, since it was not yet Mass-time, you mingled with the many already there assembled, met friends from the farthest end of the parish, whom you had not seen for seven days or fourteen, swapped the news of your respective districts, learnt the state of the markets, the doings of Parliament, the latest pronouncements of the politicians, discussed wars and rumours of wars, criticised Prime Ministers and Poor Law Guardians, and foretold the fate of Kings and cattle-dealers.

Father Dan (the Heavens be his bed, this day!) had thoughtful consideration for his flock. Knowing that, owing to the long parish distances, some of you must be late, he granted a generous margin beyond the announced time for beginning Mass—oftentimes, after every one else had arrived, sending his boy, Barney, up to the head of the risin' ground "to see if he could see any sign of Eamonn Og" (usually the last man in attendance), and, if so, to make him lift his legs and not keep Mass waiting.

Indeed, on one Sunday morning, as the group in which you yourself travelled *en route* for Mass, and already much belated, passed the gable of the confirmed old bachelor, Eamonn Og's cottage, you discovered he had only reached the laundry stage

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of his preparations. On his door-step he was devoting to the washing of his collar as much vim and energy as were needed for laundering a pair of trousers.

“Eamonn darlin’,” one of you, astonished, remarked, “you can’t overtake Mass the day!”

“Make your mind aisy,” said Eamonn; “I’ve caught it many’s a day, an’ been further behind than this. With the help o’ Heaven I’ll not miss it this day, either.”

And he didn’t. For, when you got within a mile of the chapel, Eamonn triumphantly swept past your hurrying group—with the collar (which would be donned ere he reached the chapel) pinned to dry upon the shoulder that neighboured the sun! “If there’s anywan goin’ to be late the day,” he reflected aloud in his gravest tones, “’tishn’t me.”

During the wait before Mass, and while the male portion of you were gathered in the chapel-yard and graveyard settling the affairs of nations, the women, having gone inside, were doing the Stations of the Cross; or offering prayers for the dead, and prayers for the living, prayers for the present, prayers for the absent, and an occasional toothful of prayer for themselves—the great majority of them praying silently, devoutly, earnestly, in a manner touching and impressive.

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Always, however, Shiela the *Shuiler* in one corner of the chapel vied with the *Bacach Beag* in an opposite corner, in the interest of their benefactors supplicating the saints as though they were stone-deaf; whilst, collected around the altar-rails, a gathering of *bacachs*, and professional *veteens*, led to the assault by the *Bacach Fada*, unmistakably testified their faith in the doctrine that the Kingdom of Heaven was to be taken by violence.

The most important and imposing personage of all the gathering at Mass—not excepting even the priest himself—was Barney, the Priest's Boy; a boy long since turned three-score, who wore an air of gravest responsibility that inspired awe into the souls of all, and of the old women around the altar-rails especially. The priest had on his shoulders only the cares of the parish, but on the shoulders of the Priest's Boy were piled both priest and parish. It was little wonder, then, that his back was bent.

When you listened, fascinated, to Barney clerking Mass, you never ceased to marvel at the felicity and facility with which he gave back to the priest as good as he got, making the learned Latin spin about him, and the dry bones of that dead language rattle as though it would leap to life again.

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You felt that there could be no other spot in the whole wide world where people showed so much true piety and earnest devotion as did this congregation, kneeling upon this bare, hard floor, their minds concentrated upon the solemn office proceeding, their souls uplifted to God, and their lips pleading in prayer. The dilatoriness of Father Cormac—when Barney Brian (in some soreness of spirit) accurately enough described as “a mortal good Summer priest”—gave them no concern, no thought. They only reflected that, while the holy prayers proceeded, it was their privilege, as well as their duty, to keep their hearts with God throughout—which they did in a manner that was surely pleasing to Him beyond pleasure given in greater churches, with more gorgeous surroundings, which you afterwards attended, with more richly dressed people, who, though they were possibly as sincere, certainly came not nearer to God than did these pure-hearted, faithful-souled worshippers of the mountain-moors.

Of course, you knew that, as a set-off to the edifying spectacle within, there was, just outside the chapel-door, upon one knee, and with cap in hand, awaiting the last word of blessing from the old priest's lips, a band of vagabonds from the Eskeragh, young in years, but old in crime, the

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parish-outcasts, who, at the Easter Stations, had shamefully to drag themselves to the dreaded confessional, and plead guilty to pipe-smoking, tobacco-chewing, throwing rocks down Bid Monaghan's chimney to hear her curse, and, blackest of all, playing cards for horny buttons at the back of a ditch on Sundays! And in the very midst of these Eskeragh reprobates, grievous to relate, was always to be found Eamonn Og, worried with thought of his deserted little house and farm, and cattle that cried for drink and fodder (he could hear them through his most heartfelt prayer), eager to be the first man away as he was the last to arrive. These double-eyed Eskeragh scoundrels were the Priest's Boy's heart-break. Only two things could compel them inside the chapel proper—Father Dan's stick or the breaking of the weather. But the vagabonds invariably adjourned again under Heaven's canopy immediately the weather cleared or Father Dan disappeared. And perhaps, indeed, it were profitable to the good priest, and you the earnest congregation, if these ruffians should remain in outer darkness (so to speak). For, when they were coerced recipients of grace within the chapel, they had an awkward habit of mistaking each new turn of Father Dan's sermon for the final exhortation, which always brought the sighing, sobbing congre-

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gation to its knees, supplicating guidance on the righteous path eternally.

The Eskeragh ruffians, when they considered that Father Dan had spoken long enough for them, would at the first convenient turn in his discourse, with mighty coughing and shuffling of feet and some sighing and groaning, suggestive of the multitude going on its knees, prostrate themselves as hungering to make their pious resolve. And thus, more than once, they stamped poor Father Dan into his powerful peroration, ere the body of his much-needed, long-studied discourse had been well broached.

Only, one Sunday they made the grave mistake of trying their vile ruse in too close proximity to the stout arm of Nabla MacCailin—to whom every rascal's heart of these was like a draper's window. Oiney *Ciotach*, the ringleader of the gang, as he chafed an inflamed ear outside the chapel, could only recall that he had struck the side of his head against a thunder-clap, and that the chapel, the congregation and Father Dan began a pir'uetting manœuvre, the apparent levity of which he could not for some time reconcile with the spirit of the time and the place.

But 'tis well you remember the Sunday that Father Dan tried the plan of putting two guards upon the door, after he had driven in the grace-

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less ones (and big Eamonn, of course)—yourself and Phelim McGrath being the trusty ones selected—the angels with flaming swords guarding the gate for purpose of holding the happy ones in. Now the fretting Eamonn—who could never afford the luxury of dallying in chapel to get the benefit of the trimmings—unconcernedly started for the door as the Last Gospel was ending. You two brave guardians at the exit undauntedly planted yourselves in the doorway. Your duty was unpleasant, but, like the true heroes that you were, you determined to perform it.

“Eamonn,” you began apologetically, as the big man bore down on you, “Father Dan, on our paril, warned us——” But Eamonn, impolitely interrupting your announcement, just gripped each of you, guardian-angels, by the back of the neck; one in each hand, he lifted you through the doorway, and, laying you down undamaged on either side, gravely set out homeward. He had wasted no word.

So keenly did Phelim and yourself feel the ignominy of the affair that you slunk away from your posts; and the imprisoned Eskeragh reprobrates, who had thought themselves condemned to sermon and small prayers, thanked Heaven with their hearts—some of them with their lips, too—as they made a joyous burst to freedom.

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When all the devotional exercises had concluded, and Father Dan had counselled, blessed and dismissed the congregation, many women remained. Some wanted to say the Stations of the Cross, led again by the *Bacach Fada*, who, though himself beyond need of extra prayer, in spiritual generosity performed every Sunday this meritorious task for the benefit of the sinful. Some waited to pray privately—for their poor girl in America, or their unfortunate boy at home, beating their breasts in retired corners of the chapel. Some who, like Eamonn Og, heard their cattle calling, started hastily for home. A knot of shawled and white-capped women, demanding audience of the Father, charged the Sacristy door, and were valiantly held at bay by the Priest's Boy, while the starving priest should swallow an egg and a cup of tea, both of which Barney had boiled for him within. Barney fought off the assailants with tongue and fist—weapons moral (sometimes) and physical. One of these women wanted an Office for wee Mary in Philadelphia; one, advice what to do with her sick cow; another, to inform his Reverence that the Agent had served an "injection process" because young Danny wouldn't pull his forelock to him; one woman wanted him to cure her tooth-ache; one needed the loan of a pound till she'd sell her pig;

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another, that Father Dan would keep the Balrithery boys from trespassing on her Nor'aist Park; and one, more clamorous than all the rest, insisted that he'd put her son Johnnie from talking to a daughter of the Donnellans.

You with the men gathered in the yard and continued discussions that the announcement of Mass had interrupted. You hearkened, enthralled, to Jimminy the Tailor, ascetic enthusiast, as he descanted upon the greatness of the great old Irish leader whom he adored—Butt, who made both houses of the Foreigner's Parliament tremble. Jimminy held in his hand a copy of *The Nation*, which he waved as he spoke.

And you will recall how Mattha MacAnrin, the rank materialist of the parish, drawing upon the group, listened in silence for some time, till he gathered that Jimminy MacCailin was merely indulging in a political rhapsody, and then spoke at inopportune time just as Jimminy, enwrapt with the spell of his own eloquence, and reaching a climax that held you all breathless, was thundering: "Says the undaunted Butt, shakin' his fist in the face of the Prime Minister of all England, says he——"

"Jimminy MacCailin, will ye stop your blatherskite, an' tell us out o' that paper in your fist how bullocks went at Ballinasloe?"

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Jimmy, paralyzed to silence, fixed Mattha with a look of holy indignation, blended with withering contempt. All of you looked swords and guns at the sordid man—who, however (just like the hardened wretch he was), didn't seem one bit abashed.

"Sir," Jimminy thundered, when he found his speech, "this paper concerns itself—not with the truckin' and hucksterin' of bullocks, but with somethin' your miserable poor soul knows nothin', and cares less, about. I refer to the risin' of Freedom's gloryus sun over a Freeman's Parliament in Dublin's College Green!"

Mattha, instead of withering up under Jimminy's scorching words, just gazed with some scorn at Jimminy's spare form and ascetic countenance, as he answered: "Hach! you'd have bigger fat on yer bones, then, if ye gave more thought to bullocks and less to Butt." And having fired his embarrassing shot, the earthy creature contemptuously turned on his heels and went home to herd his brother-bullocks.

"That worm," said Jimminy, with quivering finger, dramatically indicating the retiring Mattha, and speaking with such luxurious wealth of contempt as made you smack your lips—"that groveling worm is the granite millstone tied round Ireland's neck, and till, like Jonah, we cast him an'

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his like to hungerin' whales, we never need expect to sail in safety to the gloryus harbour of Freedom."

And with heavy hearts, you all clerked "Amen!"

But Jimminy's grief, and yours, for the unworthy ones with whom poor Ireland was still burthened and bowed—and all the griefs of all of you—were certain to melt quickly away before the sunniness and joyousness of the easeful, care-free, happy, holy afternoon and evening of your Sunday at Knocknagar.

But ah! sure always, night and noon, you were invoking God to send and hold His holy Sabbath peace and rest, and joy and beauty, in the brave hearts of the neighbours, and on the bright hills and shadowy glens of your, and His, beloved and lovely Knockagar.

And He will.

END

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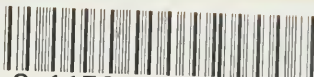
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